

The Symbolism of Gardens in Eighteen-Century Art and Literature: Nourishing Patriotism in Hagley Park by Eighteenth-Century Poets

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Abstract:

This paper explains how the ideas of patriotism captured through the symbolic meanings of Hagley Park changed. It aims to understand how the patriotic idea of a late-eighteenth-century female author connected with a bluestocking circle was influenced by the male, pre-Romantic poet and had an impact on nineteenth-century British society. To this end, the paper focuses on the poems of the pre-Romantic poet, James Thomson, and Romantic poet, Anna Barbauld in terms of patriotic attitudes towards the nation. The changes in the meanings of Hagley Park signify the rise of women's prospect for improvements enhanced by women's literary movement of the 1770s onwards.

抄録:

本論文は、英国ハグレイ庭園が象徴する愛国主義思想の推移を考察する。特に、18世紀後期の青踏派の女性作家がロマン派前期の男性詩人の影響を受けつつ、19世紀英国社会の思想形成に如何に寄与したかを論じるため、ジェームズ・トムソン及びアナ・バーボルドの詩作品を分析し、詩人達の愛国心の諸相を探る。庭園の象徴性の推移は、1770年代以降の女性作家の活動により支えられた女性の地位向上への機運と関連する。

Keywords:

Patriotism, Bluestocking poets, Landscape, Late-eighteenth-century female poets, Female Improvement

キーワード：愛国主義、青踏派詩人、風景式庭園、18世紀後期女性詩人、女性の地位向上

Introduction:

Although several detailed studies have appeared on the patriotic attitude of eighteenth-century female poets in the bluestocking circle, very few comparative studies have dealt with the changing process of the nourishment of patriotism from those of pre-Romantic male poets to a bluestocking poet. Therefore, my paper, "The Symbolism of Garden in Eighteenth-Century Art and Literature: Nourishing Patriotism in Hagley Park by Eighteenth-Century Poets" will show how their ideas of patriotism, which reflected on the symbolic meanings of Hagley Park, changed through the eighteenth-century poems. To this end, I will focus on the poems of the pre-Romantic poet, James Thomson (1700-48), and Romantic poet, Anna Barbauld (1743-1825), and the changes of symbolic meanings in their poems.

The paper consists of three parts. First, it will analyse the poem written by James Thomson and discuss the symbolic meaning of Hagley Park in terms of patriotic attitudes towards the nation. Second, it focuses on the poem written by Anna Barbauld, who corresponded with Elizabeth Montagu, and analyses the symbolic meaning of Hagley Park. Finally, it explains how the ideas of patriotism captured through the symbolic meanings of Hagley Park changed. This paper aims to understand how the patriotic idea of a late-eighteenth-century female author connected with a bluestocking circle was influenced by the male, pre-Romantic poet and had an impact on nineteenth-century British society.

I.

Let us first view the images of Hagley Park. We start with James Thomson's poem, *The Castle of Indolence*. In the poem, Thomson refers to Hagley Park and its owner, Lord George Lyttelton (1709-73) who was Thomson's patron and friend.

Another guest there was, of sense refined,
 Who felt each worth,—for every worth he had;
 Serene yet warm, humane yet firm his mind,
 As little touched as any man's with bad:
 Him through their inmost walks the Muses lad,
 To him the sacred love of Nature lent;
 And sometimes would he make our valley glad.
 Whenas we found he would not here he pent,
 To him, the better sort this friendly message sent:— (I. LXV, 577-85)

“Another guest” (577) to the Castle of Indolence in the previously mentioned passage is considered to be Lyttelton. The Castle of Indolence makes visitors feel the Miltonic sense of melancholy, and the Lyttelton-like figure owns a sophisticated “sense” (577) of art and literature, and is awarded the “sacred love of Nature” (582). He received the following letter:

“Come, dwell with us! true son of virtue, come!
But if, alas! we cannot thee persuade
To lie content beneath our peaceful dome,
Ne ever more to quit our quiet glade:
Yet, when at last thy toils, but ill apaid,
Shall dead thy fire, and damp its heavenly spark,
Thou wilt be glad to seek the rural shade,
There to indulge the muse, and nature mark:
We then a lodge for thee will rear in Hagley Park.” (I. LXVI, 586-94)

According to James Sambrook, these lines (577-85) were added to the first edition in 1744 (218); therefore, the dutiful ill-paid “toils” (590) suggests Lyttelton’s transformation into the Lord of the Treasury in the same year. He entered the government after Walpole’s fall in 1742 and became the Lord of the Treasury. In the poem, Lyttelton leaves the castle. The quoted passage suggests that Lyttelton will be given a lodge in Hagley Park because the poet is certain of his return from the ill-paid “toils.” The poet predicts that by indulging the muse, Lyttelton will discover a new element in Hagley Park’s nature.

According to *James Thomson, Letters and Documents* (165), Thomson first visited Hagley in 1743. In 1744, he added a description regarding the Gothic beauty of Hagley Park’s landscape in the *Spring* section of his revised *The Seasons*. It emphasised the value of Hagley Park and praised Lyttelton.

There along the dale
With woods o’erhung, and shagged with mossy rocks
Whence on each hand the gushing waters play,
And down the rough cascade white-dashing fall
Or gleam in lengthened vista through the trees,
You silent steal. . . . (Spring, *The Seasons* 909-14)

Here, Thomson describes Hagley Park as the idealistic landscape of Tempe, the beautiful

valley in ancient Greece, which is admired by Classic poets. Moreover, in Hagley Park, people can feel the existence of God in nature with their thoughts heightened through meditative walks.

. . . Contentment walks

The sunny glade, and feels an inward bliss
Spring o'er his mind, beyond the power of kings
To purchase.

.....

By swift degrees the love of Nature works,
And warms the bosom; till at last, sublimed
To rapture and enthusiastic heat,
We feel the present Deity, and taste
The joy of God to see a happy world!
These are the sacred feelings of thy heart,
Thy heart informed by reason's purer ray,
O Lyttelton, the friend! Thy passions thus
And meditations vary, as at large,
Courting the muse, through Hagley Park you stray.
Thy British Tempe! (*Spring, The Seasons* 894-909)

Further, the following passage proves Hagley's representation of social welfare.

And oft, conducted by historic truth,
You tread the long extent of backward time,
Planning with warm benevolence of mind
And honest zeal, unwarped by party-rage,
Britannia's weal,--how from the venal gulf
To raise her virtue and her arts revive. (*Spring, The Seasons* 926-31)

In the passage, Lyttelton is motivated to think about the welfare of the nation and politics, in addition to reviving the art of Britain.

Thomson then strengthens his strong patriotism towards Britain, in the following manner.

Happy Britannia! where the Queen of Arts,

Inspiring vigour, Liberty, abroad
Walks unconfined even to thy farthest costs,
And scatters plenty with unsparing hand.

(*Summer, The Seasons* 1442-45)

Sambrook comments that these lines reflect a patriotic panegyric which is characteristic of the eighteenth-century English georgic (225).

Thus, Thomson's poem shows Hagley Park with the symbolic meaning of moral improvement and nourishment of good sense. It is the destination of people with special talent, being described as the "heavenly spark" (591). The park can refresh the spirit of such people who are enervated by national affairs. His poetic attitude is strongly supported by the Whiggish principle of valuing liberty.

II.

Next, this paper analyses how Thomson's follower, Anna Barbauld, maintained her idea of patriotism by examining the meaning of Hagley Park in her poetical works.

In considering Barbauld's idea of patriotism, the existence of Elizabeth Montagu should be taken into account. As stated earlier, Barbauld was a correspondent to Elizabeth Montagu, who invited Barbauld to join her Bluestocking circle. Barbauld visited Montagu's house in London in 1774 (McCarthy 147). Montagu highly estimated Barbauld's *Poems*, which was published in 1773 and made her a prominent literary figure. Kathryn Sutherland claims that there was a dense network of female authorities starting from Elizabeth Carter, Mary Astell, or Montague in the 1760s (25-45).

Elizabeth Eger maintains that Barbauld was highly affected by "bluestocking culture's emphasis on female advancement through dialogue" (118), and as Eger suggests, these late-eighteenth century women writers, including Barbauld, were aware of their public and private duties (118) to pursue social and political mission to improve society. Barbauld resigned to Palgrave, Suffolk, in 1774, and she did not commit to Montagu's literary circle. Nevertheless, as Anne Mellor puts it, women poets in the late eighteenth century to the nineteenth century had a strong sense of preacher (263). Barbauld was thus the forerunner of the public figure.

Historically, as Adriana Craciun explains, in the 1770s and 1780s, radical patriotism emerged in opposition to the loyalist discourses of writers such as Richard West, Edmund Burke, and Hannah More (20). Further, in the 1790s, the war with France from 1793 worsened the British economy, and an anti-war sentiment for France developed in England.

As Mellor suggests, Barbauld's poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, written in 1811, was the result of such a sense of being a public figure (263) to enlighten people.

The poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* starts with the destruction of nature due to the war with France:

Bounteous in vain, with frantic man at strife,
 Glad Nature pours the means—the joys of life;

 Man calls to Famine, nor invokes in vain,
 Disease and Rapine follow in her train;
 The tramp of marching hosts disturbs the plough,
 The sword, not sickle, reaps the harvest now,
 And where the Soldier gleans the scant supply,
 The helpless Peasant but retires to die;
 No laws his hut from licensed outrage shield,
 And war's least horror is the ensanguined field.

(*Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* 11-12, 15-22)

Although nature is ruined by the war, Barbauld describes her strong patriotism in the following lines:

Yet, O my Country, name beloved, revered,
 By every tie that binds the soul endeared,
 Whose image to my infant senses came
 Mixt with Religion's light and Freedom's holy flame! (67-70)

McCarthy and Kraft claim that in these lines, Barbauld involves the Whig credo, "Protestantism, Liberty and England," similar to Thomson's *The Seasons* (163). Moreover, Barbauld admires Thomson as the representative poet of Britain following Milton, as shown in the following lines.

In Thomson's glass the ingenuous youth shall learn
 A fairer face of Nature to discern:
 Nor of the Bards that swept the British lyre
 Shall fade one laurel, or one note expire. (97-100)

Barbauld, like Thomson, displays the supremacy of the nature of Britain such as Thames or Hagley woods.

Beneath the spreading Platan's tent-like shade,
Or by Missouri's rushing waters laid,
"Old father Thames" shall be the Poet's theme,
Of Hagley's woods the enamoured virgin dream,
And Milton's tones the raptured ear enthral,
Mixt with the roar of Niagara's fall. . . . (91-96)

Here, Barbauld regards Hagley's woods as signifying the ideal location where young girls in America would dream. She predicts that Britain's cultural supremacy will be proved in new countries. She seems to follow Thomson's poetic style to incorporate the image of private and public improvement in Britain with the image of Hagley Park.

However, towards the end of the poem, Barbauld's attitude of highlighting Britain's cultural supremacy changes to that of condemnation, which marks the difference from Thomson's attitude towards the country. She turns to criticise the British government for continuing the war with France and apocalyptically cautions "empires" (243) of Britain "fall to dust, then arts decay," (243) because the "Genius now forsakes the favoured shore, / And hates, capricious, what he loved before" (241-42), and "the vagrant Power no more detains / The vale of Tempe, or Ausonian plains" (259-60).

We have discussed that the vale of Tempe was compared to Hagley Park in *The Seasons*, but Barbauld dismisses the image of Hagley Park as the source of virtue. She maintains that although British empire thrived, "the fairest flowers expand but to decay" (313) because "The worm is in thy core, thy glories pass away; / Arts, arms and wealth destroy the fruits they bring" (314-15). Barbauld's critical eyes are turned to corrupt politicians and people in the innermost parts of Britain—the government and people of London. Britain does not take pride in being the country of liberty.

However, this does not mean that Barbauld is underestimating Britain. Thomson believed that by being affected by Nature in Hagley Park, the poet is moralised and autonomously considers the welfare of Britain; in contrast, Barbauld believed that imagination on nature in Britain rather than experiencing nature at Hagley Park would help enforce one's virtue, leading to the progress of the people and the country.

Yet then the ingenuous youth whom Fancy fires
With pictured glories of illustrious sires,

With duteous zeal their pilgrimage shall take
 From the Blue Mountains, or Ontario's lake,
 With fond adoring steps to press the sod
 By statesmen, sages, poets, heroes trod;
 On Isis' banks to draw inspiring air,
 From Runnymede to send the patriot's prayer. . . (127-34)

Barbauld claims that "ingenuous youth" in America will imagine British nature through cultural experience and make pilgrimages to British places such as Hagley Park.

Such an idea of the evaluation of imagination on nature is supported by Barbauld's pedagogical books for children. In her pedagogical story, "Why the Earth Moves Round the Sun," in *Evenings at Home*, she maintained that children should be taught to imagine nature and science to gain affection towards God.

You are then to imagine the sun to be a mighty mass of matter, many thousand times bigger than our earth, placed in the centre, quiet and unmoved. You are to conceive our earth, as soon as created, launched with vast force in a straight line, as if it were a bowl on a green. It would have flown off in this line for ever, through the boundless regions of space, had it not at the same instant received a pull from the sun by its attraction. By the wonderful skill of the Creator, these two forces were made exactly to counterbalance each other.

(“Why the Earth Moves round the Sun,” *Evenings at Home* 114)

Barbauld believed that the power of imagination of humans would strengthen one's affection for the homeland and God. Through the power of her imagination, Barbauld feels God, being in nature or not:

In every leaf that trembles to the breeze
 I hear the voice of GOD among the trees;
 With thee in shady solitudes I walk,
 With thee in busy crowded cities talk,
 In every creature own thy forming power,
 In each event thy providence adore. (“Address to Deity,” *Poems* 61-66)

Towards the end of the poem, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld explained political independence in South American countries. By describing the patriotic movement

in these countries, Barbauld rouses patriotism among people in Britain.

For see,—to other climes the Genius soars,
He turns from Europe's desolated shores;
And lo, even now, midst mountains wrapt in storm,
On Andes' heights he shrouds his awful form
.....
Ardent, the Genius fans the noble strife,
And pours through feeble souls a higher life,
Shouts to the mingled tribes from sea to sea,
And swears—Thy world, Columbus, shall be free. (321-24, 331-34)

Thus, in Barbauld's representative work *Eighteenth Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld showed her patriotic affection towards Britain against the arrival of America, emphasising the enamoured dream of "Hagley" and "Old father Thames" as valuable poetic themes that would supposedly be used by America. The power of imagination helps people strengthen affection for the homeland and God.

Influenced by Thomson's Whiggish thought, Barbauld seemingly emphasised her patriotism through the image of Hagley. However, such an image enhancing the moral improvement in rural areas was enforced by her hope to nourish young citizens similar to other Bluestocking writers, such as Hannah More who practiced the moral education of children.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the transformation and development of ideas of Hagley's garden and woods from Thomson's meditative beauty to Barbauld's patriotism signify the changes in the target of British protests from France to Britain. However, Barbauld's criticism stemmed from her role as a public nanny to nourish the mind of the British people. The changes in the meanings of Hagley Park enlightened us to understand the rise of women's prospect for improvements enhanced by women's literary movement of the 1770s onwards.

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