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Poppies, Panthers, and Paisanos: Nature and Work in the Literature of the Industrial Age

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by

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Introduction

> When we speak of Nature it is wrong to forget that we are ourselves a part of Nature. We ought to view ourselves with the same curiosity and openness with which we study a tree, the sky or a thought, because we too are linked to the entire universe.
>
> Henri Matisse

It's six a.m., and the sun shining through his cottage window tells him that it's time to take his herd out to pasture. He clothes himself and once again decides to spurn his sandals, preferring the touch of grass to the little protection the extra layer will afford him. Stepping outside, he relishes the cool earth and the sun shining through the trees and breathes deeply. The shepherd doesn't consider his life's work harshly won, nor does he desire greater acknowledgement for tending to his flock: his work is his life, and his sheep are just as much a part of him as the stream running gently behind his house and the trees that the fresh water nourishes. And like the stream, the shepherd moves through his environment calmly and contented, his only concern being preparation for the oncoming winter. However, he knows he need not worry much, for among his neighbors and countrymen he has never gone hungry.

This is merely a glimpse into the pastoral paradise envisioned by William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850) in his romanticized reminisces of a pre-industrial world. But perhaps it was not merely pre-industrial. In this piece I hope to argue that the shepherd and the "working paradise" ideal, unified by many of Wordsworth's poems and so loved

by him did not just evaporate from the earth with the rise of industry. In order to do so I trace the shepherd's existence and appearances through three separate countries at three different periods of time around the rise and wide implementation of industrialized economies.

The first chapter deals with the rise and necessity of a romanticized past that is so heavily occupied with the idea of human interaction with "nature," beginning around the start of the industrial revolution. Through a study of enlightenment thinkers and pre-romantic philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau I attempt to locate the origins of Wordsworth's shepherd, otherwise known as his "working paradise" ideal, and I attempt to understand why the idea of "nature," while generally separated from ideas of humanity, is an absolute necessity in Wordsworth's paradise.

The second chapter is an exploration of a few of the important ideas that shaped Émile Zola's (1840 – 1902) vision of a mechanized world in the midst of the industrial revolution. The world of The Beast Within (1890) displays a ravaged French landscape with very few traces of anything perceptibly "natural" as Wordsworth would define it. However, with the rise of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, what's "natural" is once again thrust upon human beings, or rather coaxed out. Man, in this landscape lacking any of the "natural" wonders so loved by Wordsworth, reverts to a bestial and barbaric state contrary to anything one could expect from a civilized society. The "working paradise," as imagined by Wordsworth, is virtually nonexistent in Zola's novel. With morality unknown and pollution abound, the shepherd is obscured and unknown, and as a result it seems that there's not much hope left for human beings.

The third and final chapter tracks the reemergence of Wordsworth's ideal in the United States, long after its industry been established. Using John Steinbeck's (1902 – 1968) novel Cannery Row (1945), I attempt to explain how Steinbeck reimagined the shepherd of Wordsworth's working paradise, and explore how exactly such an idea could find, or perhaps make itself a new niche in a rusting, bent up world.

The three radically different authors that I chose are each singularly important when attempting the understand this impact of industry: each from different times, countries, and backgrounds, their lives forming a solid timeline from around the start of the industrial revolution to long afterwards, each author with different experiences in regards to industry and the natural world around them. Through a reading of Wordsworth's poetry on the beauty of nature, I hope to better understand the beasts that emerge in Zola's flowerless world, and the unremitting and unrelenting beauty of Steinbeck's well-established industrial world, despite the rust and despite the constant frustration.

Chapter I

The Cloud and the Shepherd:
A Brief Background and the Romantic Poets

The romantic period of poetry and writing can scarcely be pinned to a single definition if only because of its vastness, but understanding its roots can help to understand why certain authors were so obsessed with certain things, such as nature. Romanticism sprouted around the time of the industrial revolution, around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and was at least partially the result of a slowly mechanizing workforce and the move to cities. In this chapter I'll be exploring how exactly the pre-romantic ideals of the enlightenment that deal with ideas of work and land, heavily resting in the minds of a disillusioned mass of people that, in an industrializing society, would be living in heavily polluted cities gave rise to a movement of poets such as William Wordsworth. These poets, yearning for a time quickly fading from living memory, reimagined what it meant to work for nobody but oneself in a pastoral countryside.

I'll be starting with the father of the romantics, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and his *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of the Inequalities Among Men*, in which he uses his reasoned imagination to reach as far back as he possibly can to the earliest forms of civilization in order to understand human beings as creatures, and from that point begin to understand how homo sapiens have found themselves decidedly separate from nature.

Rousseau begins his *Discourse* by entering a thorough exploration of his imagined beginnings of human society, speculating upon the "savage" nature of mankind before civilization through a systematic examination of the numerous characteristics that set men apart from beasts, and how one can easily find man's place among them. Looking at "savage man", (i.e., pre-civilized man) Rousseau finds a creature physically weak but intelligent and self-aware, writing: "men, dispersed among animals, observe and imitate their industry, and thereby develop in themselves the instinct of the beasts; with the advantage that whereas each species has only its own proper instincts, man– perhaps having none of his own…" (Rousseau 105) According to Rousseau, every human action is done with instinct imitated rather than innate: through learned tactics, either by spending time watching animals, or learning from his own mistakes or those of his peers. Rousseau, looking inwardly at his own ability to reason, assumes that nothing that he does is merely instinctual but is reasoned fully: something greatly different than the mechanical actions of the natural world. Rousseau's image of the savage man continues with the belief that there are profound differences between mankind and beasts. This is just one of the numerous romantic idealizations set upon ideal man in order to broaden the alleged gap between mankind as a species from the other creatures of the world: a chasm that is shrinking at an alarming rate in Rousseau's time and onward.

However flawed, contextualizing this reasoning allows us to view man as being separate from beasts only through his ability to do things that can be planned and calculated, and he can change himself to fit his environment. As Rousseau writes: man has "the faculty of self-perfection." (Rousseau 114) The means of self-perfection—at least before the spark of civilization set the gears of artificial means of production to

move across the earth—lay simply in watching other animals hunt and interact with their surroundings, and eventually, human beings would watch and learn how the plant yields its fruits, and its fruits contain seeds, which can then be manipulated to produce as much nourishment as land can physically maintain.

With this in mind, Rousseau argues that man did not merely find a means of producing vast amounts of food without hunting, but something much more important when one is searching for the reasons for inequality among men: property. When one man sows seed, in order to make sure his work was not in vain, he puts up fences and claims the land as his own domain. Then, knowing full well that a fence means absolutely nothing to a "savage man", many of these self-proclaimed property-possessing men band together with mutual interest in the legitimacy of their fences, and these men came to be known as kings, lords, and governments. Eventually, these men called themselves the commonwealth and created law to keep human beings—and their soil—safe from the wandering hands of other human beings, those they would call "savage man", or he without law. When this happened, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "nature was subjected to law." (Rousseau 102) Nature, biblically believed to be possessed by all of mankind uniformly and without boundaries (that is, if one traces back the lineage of mankind's land ownership to the Garden of Eden) is now divided amongst those who stuck their fence posts into the ground first.

If property in order to protect one's fruits of labor plays such a vital role in separating the "civilized man" from the "savage man," then it's not a stretch to say that work is precisely what Rousseau imagines as the cause of the break between human beings and the natural world. If one must have a sense of security over land in order to

utilize it to produce food, then ownership, or at least some form of ownership is what allowed humans to create civilized societies.

It's incredibly important to keep in mind that Rousseau prefaces this imagined history of mankind as one of his "thought experiments", and so even Rousseau thought it was important to note that to know man's nature before the advent of civilization is entirely impossible, just as impossible as understanding how pre-civilized man considered his surroundings: Rousseau is merely being speculative. Nonetheless, one must consider the first subjugation of "nature" to mankind's laws as the loss of its "innocence:" in the scenario of the fence posts, for instance, the fence is all that it takes for a plot of land to turn from wild and unbounded (literally) to become knowable, bridled, and domesticated. No longer free and unattainable, now regulated, and in some cases, even patrolled. Now the world has been split in two: this side of the fence, and everywhere else.

Rousseau's vision of the beginnings of property was a vivid reimagining of the ideas postulated by philosopher John Locke (1632 – 1704), who, in his Second Treatise of Government (1689) maintained that one can absolutely own land: he asserted that land ownership can only happen when one works on and for the land he of which he claims ownership:

> Though the water running in the fountain be every one's, yet who can doubt but that in the pitches is his only who drew it out? His labor has taken it out of the hands of nature where it was common and belonged equally to all her children, and has thereby appropriated it to himself. (Locke 3.29)

> As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labor fix a property in; whatever is beyond this is more than his share and belongs to others. (Locke 3.31)

Locke firmly believes that not only is land ownership possible, but that it is a natural, and therefore inalienable right for all of mankind. This is not so different from Rousseau's idea that one can own land based on the need to harvest that which one has set into the soil: both philosophers believe that after working the land, one becomes entitled to the claim of it. However, Locke is much more optimistic, and seems to suggest that work must be done continually, while Rousseau asserts that only greed can come of such practices.

Following Locke and Rousseau's similar assertions, one must consider the fact that because the idea of man's ability to own land comes from the desire to be the benefactor of the fruits of one's labor, land ownership, at least at this first instance, is a result of his territorialism, the origins of which can be easily traced back to the instinct of animalistic self-preservation, and not merely a natural human right: after all, "what man would be insane enough to torment himself cultivating a field that will be plundered by the first comer, whether man or beast, for whom the crop is suitable? … In a word, how could this situation inspire mankind to cultivate the earth as long as it is not divided among them: that is to say, as long as the state of nature is not annihilated?" (Rousseau 119) Rousseau clearly believes that once property is established, the "state of nature" can be no more. However, Rousseau's ideas seem to contradict each other from a contemporary perspective. How can man, in acting under animalistic self-preservation, "annihilate the state of nature?"

Recall the definition Locke gives to the state of nature: "living according to reason, without a common superior on earth, to judge between them, is properly the state of nature." (Locke 2.19) Between these two philosophers, it is difficult to reconcile the idea that nature can exist while land ownership exists as well. Land ownership and government implies the subjugation of nature to law, revoking its status as natural. Locke seemingly resolves this conflict with himself by stating:

> …at present that since all princes and rulers of independent governments all through the world are in a state of nature, it is plain the world never was, nor ever will be, without numbers of men in that state. (Locke 2.14)

While believing that man is in a state of nature only when he is without law, Locke has also written that man never was in a state of nature because superiors have always existed, while also stating that man has never existed without a form of government, and therefore he believes it natural for man to be ruled. How Locke found himself at the point where he can properly assert that man has always and will always be subject to some law or the will of another, and that this state is a state of nature goes beyond the "reason" that he seems to consider himself beholden to.

We find between Locke and Rousseau two conflicting definitions of what can or cannot be defined as "natural." They are irreconcilable, at least on this point, and therefore they must be kept separate. If we are to stay true to the timeline, the change that Rousseau applied to Locke's definition of "nature" merely applies a more developed idea of reason, removing some of the seeming contradictions that are strewn throughout his writings. This marks a shift in thought, or an evolution of human perception and self-

perception: the steady reassimilation of mankind from his self-assigned seat at the foot of God's throne, and through reason, perceptiveness, and some imagination, man is slowly drifting from his long-held belief that he holds utter dominance over every aspect of the natural world. Now, if greed and the desire to own the land is not natural, nor is it innate, then it is indeed strange that it exists as a side effect of the apparently problematic issue that is self-preservation.

If we are to follow Rousseau's train of thought, the advent of greed is not so curious a problem, and it certainly developed from man's instincts. Rousseau marks the ownership of property and the advent of greed as man's departure from the "natural world", but Locke marks that departure with the application of laws beyond the "natural law." Following Rousseau's imagined chronology of human development in which the idea of human law comes from the belief in property, Locke's assertion may mean something quite different. Looking at man in this natural state, Locke sees him governed by his version of *natural law*, or "life, liberty, and property." (Locke 2. 4) Man, for Locke, owned property in his natural state, despite the problems that arise within Locke's own philosophy when both rules are applied simultaneously. Regardless, Locke, only speaking of natural rights and freedoms and he does not address greed, and it is therefore difficult to find an appearance of greediness so clearly defined as Rousseau's, so from this point we will be chiefly dealing with Rousseau, as well as the fact that he allowed himself to a wider imagination much more free of constraints outlined by the Bible, allowing him much more freedom than Locke. That's not to say that Locke's visions were entirely dependent on his beliefs, but rather that the culture in which he found himself led him in a particular direction, one that held firmly to the idea that God and the

Bible were absolute truths, and therefore, the Bible was generally held as the basis of all reason upon which philosophers, such as Locke, constructed their ideals and thought processes.

When Rousseau speaks of the origins of human greediness, he addresses the fact that human kind developed in a particular manner, one that made him suitable for particular things:

> Man has the advantage that, no less adept at running than they and finding almost certain refuge in trees, he always has the option of accepting or leaving the encounter and the choice of flight or combat. Let us add that it does not appear that any animal naturally makes war upon man except in the case of self-defense or extreme hunger… (Rousseau 108)

Man is going to have a very hard time running from that which threatens his life when his location is set and staked into the ground in the form of farming. Flight is no longer possible if he must stand his ground over his stable way of growing his living. And therefore, man has been obligated to find a new way of not only protecting himself, but also a way of protecting his property which, for all intents and purposes, he often considers a part of himself if he has worked for it, so goes those natural laws.

And the extra protection that one feels necessary, excluding weaponry which only work on a small scale, is the creation of laws: agreements among men which entirely stake human beings to the ground upon which they find themselves, for the sake of the argument, “in their possession.” Of course, the spirit of adventure dwindles when man finds himself in a society as such, and ideas of pre-civilization “freedom” tend to become

much more attractive, even if those brutish aspects of pre-civilized life never before appealed to most humans. Mankind, without a reliable food source yearns for consistent meals, and he who knows nothing else knows not the pain of hunger, but knows the absent excitement from books or imagination. So when man found himself suddenly outside of what he learned to regard as "nature" or "wilderness" by his ancestors' volition, he began to yearn for what they had abandoned so long ago, when they made the decision to adopt property, even if that abandonment of barbarism was for good reason. Rousseau writes, "this sentiment must be the eulogy of your first ancestors, the criticism of your contemporaries, and the dread of those who will have to live after you." (Rousseau 104) And yet the desire to return persists, and the negative aspects of living in a dense forest, and to be entirely self-sustaining, without borders, are often overlooked.

Michael Wood explores the similar phenomenon of the "lost paradise," and though he does it through a Proustian lens, the rationalization applies nonetheless. Wood explains that:

> It's not paradise until it's lost; it's paradise because it's lost. Loss is all there is. Or more precisely: absence or lack is what there is, and culture after culture construes this sad state of affairs as a story of loss. *We haven't got* turns into *we used to have*. The true paradises, indeed the only paradises, are the ones we have always already lost, because loss is what they are for, they have no other purpose than to be lost.
>
> (Wood 7)

While Wood is talking about Proust, the message vaguely echoes Rousseau's opinion on man's occasional desire to return to nature, and it much better explains the reason that one would be attracted to the idea of that return. The difference is, while Wood explains

that a return is impossible, Rousseau is much more direct, saying that the return to nature would be catastrophic, and would not at all fulfill those romantic desires of the one doing the return, nor would it comfort his descendants, granted that their fathers could, of course, survive in such a harsh environment without preparation or a firm hold on the reality of their desires.

However skeptical he seems to be in his *Discourse,* Rousseau seems to be able to foresee both the romantic idealization of nature, often seen in the work of poets such as William Wordsworth and Victor Hugo, as well as the enormous shift in ideas on the "natural" that Charles Darwin provides to humanity: so jarring indeed that many refuse to believe it. Rousseau is the first of a relatively fast series of realizations in philosophy and human reasoning, one that would examine and later challenge the long held belief that man and nature are intrinsically separate and far from equal in value: man being created by God and nature merely in order to serve the needs and desires of mankind. Rousseau imagines man in his primal state, before civilization, though he is never entirely removed from the creationist mode of thought. Using his reason and imagination, Rousseau begins leveling human beings to a part of nature with similar tendencies to that of beasts, the main difference outlined earlier, that man has no instinct but reason, equating instinct and free will: and so he revered it, and based much of his thoughts and writings on its workings. But for the romantics, who began to appear at least partially as a result of the industrial revolution, using reason also meant that it was possible to be one with the flowers and trees, and clouds, as well.

However, Rousseau's lowering of man into the natural world is not one wholly innocent of the assumption that man and nature are two radically different entities. In the

"Fifth Walk" of his Reveries of a Solitary Walker, Rousseau focuses heavily on the experience of becoming one with nature, or realistically, the process of losing oneself entirely, which implies that the human and the natural are incompatible: inevitably and forever separate, unless one consumes the other. Recalling his time spent on the Île de la Motte, Rousseau writes of his adoration of the world he found there, for the most part due to the island's beauty it gave Rousseau the ability "to lose [himself] altogether in the charms of nature and to meditate in a silence unbroken by any sound other than that of the cry of eagles, occasional birdsong, and the rumbling of streams cascading down the mountains." (Rousseau 49) His desire to "lose himself," or be "one with nature" lies in his understanding of the beauty of the nature world: that one cannot fully appreciate it from the perspective of a self, because the ego will inevitably obscure natural beauty.

Wood's discourse on the lost paradise rings true when we compare the catalysts of the "romantic period" to those of the industrial revolution. Of course, there were many thinkers, like Rousseau, whose ideas were precursors to the romantics as well as the rise of industrialism, and whose writings would become much more popular in the mid nineteenth century, in the midst of a great societal upheaval. One of these such philosophers was Gilbert White, a eighteenth century ecologist priest whose writings on the minute natural occurrences in his small village in rural England would enchant romantics and biologists alike. By applying Wood's thesis to many romantic tendencies, including the need to have optimistic memories, it seems abundantly clear why the romantics would be so enamored by country life. However, in order to describe this phenomenon more fully, Donald Worster writes that once a large portion of people

moved to cities in order to work in factories, "never again would it be possible… to take for granted a sense of permanence of stability." (Worster 14) Despite the fact that the "pastoral dream" may have never existed in truth, upon stepping into a world blackened by industry and where children no longer roam fields but instead were confined to their low-paying and dangerous factory jobs, people began to long for what they left behind when they departed their farming villages in search of a better life.

We now know that that city life quickly turned out to be, quite ironically, much darker and more lonely despite the fact that during the night, dim gas lamps illuminated street corners, and tenement buildings had people living in smaller spaces with the highest population density many of its inhabitants had ever seen. William Wordsworth addresses this idea in his poem, "The Prelude."

> Above all, one thought
> Baffled my understanding, how man lives
> Even next-door neighbors, as we say, yet still
> Strangers, and knew not each other's names.
> ("The Prelude." Book VII. 117-120)

William Wordsworth had much trouble coming to terms with the irrationality of what should have been the pinnacle of human rationalism: in cities, everything was created around the idea that it would be optimized and direct, and yet many of the things people once took for granted, such as friendly neighbors, had now disappeared even though they now had more neighbors than ever before: cities, built upon rationalist ideals, were very quickly becoming the antithesis of rationality. Wordsworth is very clearly critiquing the living spaces of many of his contemporaries, and for the most part, his own living situation as well. But the form of much of his poetry, this included, obeys a very rigid

form and structure, which is very classically English, of which the pastoral ideal is a vital part. Alternatively, the manner in which Wordsworth implements this classic form is not nearly as rigid as many of his precursors: within the confines of his lyrical structure, his prose seem to flow over the edges, and he frequently goes out of meter and hardly obeys the classically English rhyming pattern, or any rhyming pattern at all. The effect is that the poem seems to remind one of an overflowing garden, ridden with weeds yet still beautiful, but tragically so. This nods to another one of Wordsworth's poems, "The Ruined Cottage," which I'll talk about later in this chapter.

So we see that the pastoral ideal becomes desirable for romantic writers incredibly often. From a twenty first century perspective, it may seem slightly ridiculous that pastoralist and naturalistic ideals could overlap as heavily as they do for the romantics, but more often than not, that breaching is not even noticed, and it's quite possible that there never seemed to be a separation between the pastoral countryside and nature until much later, which is something I'll explain later on. For the time being, it must be acknowledged that "pastoral" and "natural" are quite synonymous for many of these romantic writers: it seemed to merely mean anywhere that's not a city, or wherever industry had not yet taken hold.

The romantics turned their eyes to the natural world because they felt disconnected from that beauty. Keeping in mind the nature of romanticism as imagined retrospect outlined by Wood and Rousseau's writings earlier in the chapter, one can be sure that it's human nature to yearn for that which cannot be attained. That desire for what one sees as unreachable explains why the romantics felt it necessary to completely

assure themselves that not only was it possible to be one with the natural world, but that through poetry, it could absolutely be done:

> [little read writer and philosopher, William] Hazlitt suggests that the word 'poetry' should not be confined to something found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables; rather, poetry is 'the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself'; further, 'wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that "spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun," – *there* is poetry, in its birth' In Romantic poetics, poetry is to be found not only in language but in nature; it is not only a means of communication between man and the natural world.
>
> (Bate 17)

This idea sparked a movement of poets who sought to reunite with beauty. For famous romantic poets such as Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885) and William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850), the occupation with nature had entirely to do with the beauty that it represented. They wrote poetry in order to reconnect to nature, poetry being the only language understood by both humans and nature. This allowed a perceived "communication" between man and nature, yet there continues to be an enormous disjunction between the two bodies, but the romantics sought to bridge that gap as best they could, perhaps not seeing that the gap was the only reason they were able to fall in love with what they perceived as the natural world in the first place.

However, for many of the romantic poets I'll be referencing from here on, it must be acknowledged that the gap between themselves and the natural world was virtually nonexistent: they as poets could *be one* with nature through writing, and reading the

earth. Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885), in his book of poetry Les Contemplations (1856), writes on this idea:

> I was reading. What was I reading? Ah, that old severe book.
> That eternal poem! — The Bible? — No, the earth!
> Every morning, Plato, when the blue sky is reborn,
> Read Homeric verse, and I the lettering of God's flowers.
> I spell the hedges, the twigs and weeds and streams;
> No need of carrying books
> For I have each of them beneath my feet!
> ("Je Lisais, que Lisais-Je?" 1-7)

Through Victor Hugo at least, it's clear how far we've come since John Locke in terms of religiosity: his views of the world and nature do not reflect the Bible and its teachings, but from reasoning and observant eyes examining (and reading) nature itself. And now we're not strictly limited to the Christian looking glass that defined those philosophies outlined by Locke, and occasionally Rousseau as well. Though those philosophers claimed to be governed by reason, the Bible was often present in many of their works. Hugo, however, was clearly much less influenced by his religious past, and more influenced by direct stimuli: i.e., what he could gather through his senses directly from his surroundings. Between Locke and Hugo, religiosity and reason have slowly but ineffably drifted from one another: they are no longer one, and so nature, in turn, becomes the new voice of intelligence and reason for the romantics: it is what can be seen and heard and gathered from ones surroundings, and it has been relatively unaffected and unaltered by the hands of man.

It's also important to note that Hugo is approaching his "reading of nature" as a scholarly approach, though he is far from claiming that he doesn't get enjoyment from his

studies. For Hugo, nature is to him as Homer is to Plato: he explains that the greatness that he has reached is a result of the teachings of the natural world: that poetry can only be learned from nature itself, for it is the language of nature. William Wordsworth was also of this mind, except for him, "poetry [was] a means of emotional communication between man and the natural world." (Bate 17) Between the two romantic poets, everything that one could learn about being human could (and ought to be) learned from one's natural surroundings, giving little credit to human society as a whole: they had moved on, and they believed that many of the undiscovered universal truths and comfort could only be found in the natural.

The desire to "reunite" man and nature is problematic in and of itself, for the mere acknowledgement of a gap is proof that such a gap exists. Ironic as it seems that man would open up a gap through his attempt to close it, even in the time of Locke, when people tended to avoid the open wilderness, they never believed that they were entirely separate from it, but instead that it was the realm in which humanity has complete control. In this vein, we discover some early "natural philosophers," like Gilbert White for instance, who in his book A Natural History of Selborne, published in 1789, (quite before this idea was popular) looked upon the pastoral countryside of Selborne, Great Britain as his own central locale of natural phenomena. Despite the fact that in this contemporary age, it's much more difficult to consider pastoral lands as "untouched", for they are made up of farms and houses among other products of human civilization, White would argue quite differently. In his 1977 book Nature's Economy, Donald Worster outlines why White's view of nature, while seemingly very limited today, made perfect sense at the time:

> One might argue that the equilibrium between man and nature in Selborne required the remorseless elimination of all creatures deemed unruly, useless, irregular, or hostile. And one might find it hard to believe that a rigorous scientific temperament could lie down alongside piety in such bucolic pastures. There is truth in each of these charges… For White himself there seems to have been no contradictions of misgivings… Only in a modern consciousness could these reconciliations seem superficial, false, or impossible.
>
> (Worster 11)

For White, the idea of being "one" with nature, as the romantics seem to suggest, is as alien a concept as being one with one's own mother. White, while being heavily fascinated with the natural cycle of the world, as well as being one of the first people to observe the intricacies of an ecosystem, never commented on the destructiveness of human habits, such as chopping down trees for firewood or plowing fields for farmland. At the very least, White believed that mankind is a part of the natural cycle irrevocably, and thus his actions could only be natural, or in the instinct of self-preservation. This is an idea that would be adopted, possibly unwittingly, over fifty years later by romantic poets such as William Wordsworth as part of his working paradise ideal.

The working paradise ideal as outlined by Wordsworth is an amalgamation of enlightenment and post-enlightenment ideals of the writers Locke and Rousseau, as I've explored, and likely at least partially inspired by the shepherd Corin of William Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*, who defines his idea of work and foreshadows Wordsworth's working paradise ideal when he says, "Sir, I am a true labourer. I earn that I eat, eat that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's

good, content with my hard; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck." (*As You Like It,* III. ii. 71 – 5, via Bate 26)

This kind of pastoral ideal would return to the thoughts of post-industrial thinkers and writers, when the English-speaking world turned to White for reminders of how the old world used to function before the great exodus from the countryside to cities caused by the industry boom. Wordsworth, living in a city yet put off by "next-door neighbors, as we say, yet still strangers", would also rely heavily on the bucolic pastures and quaint old cottages for much of his poetry. But like White, even in the romanticized countryside and from the perspective of a romantic poet, the only kind of nature that one can live with is nature that has been bridled and controlled in some way. In his poem "The Ruined Cottage," Wordsworth tells the story of a soldier's mourning widow, whose mental state declines with that of the cottage that she inhabits. That cottage, once beautifully curated and lovely to behold, has fallen into a wretched state, with "knots of worthless stone-crop" (Wordsworth 368) and unprofitable bindweed" (Wordsworth 372). The words "worthless" and "unprofitable" used as adjectives to describe the unyielding order of the undesirable aspects of nature harks back to White, to whom human restraints placed upon the natural cycle were in themselves, natural. And without which, we begin to see the sublime aspects of the wilderness: a loss of comfort and control. The "working paradise" that Wordsworth was relying upon when he returned to the pastoral field is easily lost without any sort of strong maintenance.

For many of the romantics, (in this I'll include White, for he was very clearly a proto-romantic) the pastoral ideal signified man's "natural state", and thus the desire to "return to nature" or the desire to learn from nature, as Hugo would propose, is merely an

escapist view of industrialization. However, this escapist ideal only occasionally includes other people: the desire to return to nature is, realistically, just a desire to return to a more stable environment with friendly neighbors. Perhaps, for the romantic writers, this is what is considered man's natural state: to live in small farming towns. Indeed, this image seems an ideal combination of Locke and Rousseau's imagined primordial man, yet post-property. But the exact reason for their desire to return to the pastoral countryside had also made a profound effect upon their worldviews, such as their distaste for property. Rousseau, even before the advent of industrial society makes what would become a typical romantic gesture against property during one of his solitary walks, writing, "surrounded by such riches, how could one possibly keep a faithful record of them?" (Rousseau 12) Rousseau makes a point of gesturing towards the uncountable richness of his environment in order to explain the ways in which the grasping of property is futile in such a situation.

While Rousseau is speaking of cataloguing the flowering plants and grasses near his home, the fact that he refers to them as "riches" displays a new sort of awareness of environment: richness comes from beauty, and one need not own it to appreciate it. In fact, its abundance and unculpability is part of what makes it so beautiful. Wordsworth held this same ideal, and in the last section in his *Poems on the Naming of Places*, first published in his book Lyrical Ballads in 1800, he writes:

> Our walk was far among the ancient trees:
> There was no road, nor any woodman's path;
> But a thick umbrage—checking the wild growth
> Of weed and sapling, along soft green turf
> Beneath the branches—of itself had made

A track, that brought us to a slip of lawn,
And a small bed of water in the woods.
All round this pool both flocks and herds might drink
On its firm margin, even as from a well,
Or some stone-basin which the herdsman's hand
Had shaped for their refreshment; nor did sun,
Or wind from any quarter, ever come,
But as a blessing to this calm recess,
This glade of water and this one green field.
The spot was made by Nature for herself;
The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
Unknown to them; but it is beautiful;
And if a man should plant his cottage near,
Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
And blend its waters with his daily meal,
He would so love it, that in his death-hour
Its image would survive among his thoughts:
And therefore, my sweet **Mary**, this still Nook,
With all its beeches, we have named from You!
("V. to M.H." from "On the Naming of Places." 1-24)

The first few lines of the poem recall a far secluded area of a forest, without a path and yet an "umbrage," or shadow from the trees allows the ground to be mostly clear of weeds. It's a natural path, and human kind need not blaze a trail of any kind. It is the perfect image of a wooded walking-trail from a pastoral countryside, and yet "the spot was made by Nature for herself;/The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain/unknown to them." Wordsworth, upon imagining one of the most beautiful places in all of nature, both makes it freely accessible to people and asserts that such a thing would never—or perhaps could never—happen. More interestingly, after his stating that the place contains no "woodsman's path" is his affirmation of human presence nonetheless: not explicitly, however, but Wordsworth hints at human presence, at least a minor one, in saying "All round this pool both flocks and herds might drink/On its firm margin, even as from a

well,/Or some stone-basin which the herdsman's hand/Had shaped for their refreshment." Somehow, this herdsman or shepherd exists outside of the standard human existence of a traveller or woodsman, and is therefore able to water his herd in the place made "by Nature for herself." The placement of the shepherd in that sacred spot implies that he is somehow more natural than those who have found themselves in different professions, and that he is somehow better for it.

The hypothetical man that "plants his cottage near" later in the poem can therefore only feasibly be that shepherd, for he seems to be the only one able to enter. With the lines that follow, Wordsworth makes it abundantly clear that not only is he somehow part of nature because of his occupation which allows him to enter, but his life is wholly better for it: fulfilling and perhaps even enjoyable. Wordsworth postulates, "Should he sleep beneath the shelter of its trees/and blend its waters with his daily meal/he would so love it" and so on. This suggests that appreciation doesn't come from being accepted by an untouched natural heaven, but accepting it wholly as well, in turn. He must literally allow his surroundings to become part of him, and only then will he be contented.

Wordsworth believes he has found a way for man to become wholly part of nature, if the previous passage is as telling as it seems. But why is the shepherd different from the woodsman? Perhaps, for Wordsworth, the shepherd fits better into his notion of a working paradise, and upon a wider reading of his poetry, it's quite clear that Wordsworth made the claim that the paradise of nature can be enjoyed much more when one is working with it and for himself, which is reminiscent of Locke's assertion that man can only truly own land when he works it:

> But lovelier far than this the paradise
> Where I was reared, in Nature's primitive gifts
> Favored no less, and more to every sense
> Delicious, seeing the sun and sky,
> The elements, and seasons in their change,
> Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there,
> The heart of man; a district on all sides
> The fragrance of breathing of humanity,
> Man free, man working for himself, with choice
> Of time, and place, and object.
>
> ("The Prelude." Book VIII. 144-53)

Wordsworth is detailing how working within the pastoral ideal is greater and more fulfilling than simply a visitation, like Rousseau, or some kind of "nature tourist," as if to work within nature is allows post-property humans to be a part of it rather than merely an observer. In this instance of Wordsworth's poetry, the elements and the seasons labor along with the laborer, as if they are working with a common goal: "Marx argued that when we work for someone else we become alienated: 'the worker related to the product of his labour as to an alien object.' But as the Author of Romantic Ecology, Jonathan Bate points out: "Wordsworth's shepherds are free, they work for themselves, they represent the spirit of unalienated labour." (Bate 22) Bate then goes on to point out that Wordsworth's paradise is very different from that which we lost when we left the Garden of Eden, and this is because we are working in tandem with nature, rather than it working for us. Work plays a vital role in Wordsworth's paradise ideal, and this harks back to some of Gilbert White's ideas, or rather lack of consideration that man destroys nature by existing within it, and utilizing it for his own good, at least not to the extent that the

industrialists would: blackening the sky and polluting the air with smoke from their factories, obscuring Wordsworth's working paradise.

Not to say that the shepherd lived a perfectly ideal life, far from it. Speaking of Alexander Pope, another romantic poet in the realm of Wordsworth: "the art of pastoral lay 'in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries.'" (Bate 26) But for Wordsworth, "paradise" only existed in relation to the new standard of the cities: it was entirely relative, and not "paradise" in the sense of Eden whatsoever. Wordsworth doesn't write for a perfect ideal, but takes more from the shepherd Corin of William Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*, as I've explained earlier in the chapter. Paradise isn't a workless, easy life, but rather just a life and living that one can exist and work for oneself and be satisfied. The "working paradise" exists because of the thankless, low-paying jobs in cities that many people found when they left their farming communities during the industrial revolution. That reality had disappeared, and only now that such a return is impossible is it suddenly so desirable. That's not to say that romantic idealists are merely dreamers, but rather to show how Wood's theory holds some truth, even when the drop in quality is quite real: paradise *can* exist, but only in hindsight, and not merely in one's imagination.

Now it's somewhat possible that Wood's theory of paradise applies less to those like Wordsworth, but it would be quite difficult to separate the industrially inspired move to cities from the countryside from the desire for the return. The rise of industry, in some way, also turned the natural, meaning natural resources into a commodity in such a way that had never been seen on earth prior: with the rise of factories, the main limiting factor in expansion is the scarcity of natural resources. At this point more than ever before is

property an issue: owning land in order to maintain that land in a working paradise is one thing, but now the land is being visually exploited on such a grand scale, and for the benefit of so few at the expense of Hugo's teacher: the Earth. At one point, working all hours of the day (as in Wordsworth's working paradise) meant one could actually survive and thrive, not to mention be content in the work he was doing. The industrial worker, for all intents and purposes, has been alienated from his environment and the people in it: he cannot be like the shepherd of Wordsworth's working paradise, being self-fulfilling and working only for himself and nature, and yet he is confined to a small apartment, reserved to live without real neighbors.

Privatization for the sake of industry bothered Wordsworth greatly, which is why he turned his gaze to the things he did:

> Governments may legislate about what we emit into the air, and in that sense the constitution of nature is determined by government and industry, but we cannot parcel out the air as we parcel out the land. And water can only be privatized in a limited sense. The particles of water which form clouds — and we need no reminding of how important clouds were to Wordsworth, cannot be possessed or sold.
>
> (Bate 19)

Therefore, the reason that Wordsworth found nature, hard work, and the pastoral ideal so important was because he felt that in an industrialized world, many people had lost sight of the beauty that they once beheld. And now, with that in memory (for Wordsworth) rather than a daily normality, it has become an imperfect ideal, rather than the dystopian world into which they relocated.

The romantic era, or the looking back to a natural ideal came into fruition because of the radical shift from pastoral life to industrialized city life, and with that old life still in memory, it's quite easy to imagine that the return to a more pastoral state would be desirable. For many romantics, it's obvious that the change was more than a bit disturbing, especially with the past so closely in memory. Of course, as with most changes as drastic as industrialization it would soon be forgotten what it was like, as William Wordsworth would have put it, to be human in a self-fulfilling and constructive manner: that is, within a natural environment, working for oneself and for the world around him. When the change is fully implemented and most people no longer remember what it was like to live a life like the idyllic shepherd of Wordsworth's working paradise, then we will see a stunning realization and a end to the era of romantic literature: the animal in man will return, and he will once again be part of nature, but not at all in the sense that would be as wondrous as the romantics would have liked.

Chapter II

Industry and the Caged Animal: Zola's Rediscovery of Man as the Beast, the Lost Shepherd

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin published a book that would go on to change the fundamental ways in which man viewed the world around him, and by extension how he lived within it and won his livelihood. This book would be called The Origin of Species, released in 1859, and with it Darwin sought to outline the ways that organisms adapt to their environments by means of gradual mutation, and furthermore how those organisms find and keep their niche in their respective ecosystems. One could no longer assert that nature and its organisms have always remained static since they were placed upon this Earth, and the idea of a "natural state," as explored by philosophers such as Rousseau lost much of its meaning, because in a an ever-changing and ever-evolving world, how could one locate a "beginning?"

It's plain to see why Darwin's assertions on evolution by natural selection were not immediately adopted over the previously held notions of creationism and even Lamarckian theories[1] of evolution: the ideas were incredibly complex, and proving that organisms can change over thousands (hundreds of thousands) of years is something not easily accomplished. The span of time that evolution requires to make real change to an

[1] Jean-Baptiste Lamarck postulated one of the early theories of evolution, the idea that environment gives rise to change within organisms, however the means in which this happened was very different from Darwin's theory. Whereas Darwin's theory was complex and needed thousands of years before significant change occurred, Lamarckian theory suggested that such change could occur within a generation, meaning organisms could improve themselves directly.

organism is so immense that it was difficult to imagine. So even when other biologists and evolutionary theorists gradually came to accept Darwinian evolution as scientific fact, many people sought to simplify the idea in order to better understand the scientific breakthrough, and in so doing searched for evidence in the world immediately around them, on a microscopic level. This search for explanation led many people to a vastly oversimplified understanding of the complex theories and ideas set forth by Darwin, exacerbated by the fact that many people lived for much of their lives in the cities devoid of much more than human life and habitation.

Darwin's theories challenged every enlightenment ideal that concerned human nature, and the place of humans in the world for all of living memory. Suddenly, the new scientific fact helped bring on the realization that humans and animals were one and the same, and that man must, therefore, be merely another animal in his own self-made environment: the city.

Further, the fact that people found themselves in cities had mostly to do with the industrial boom, which was simultaneously pushing humanity forward and forcing a reconsideration of the place of man in the animal kingdom and further, human nature. All this at the same time that cities existed on a larger scale and people lived in closer quarters than the world had ever before seen. The human world had suddenly shrunk from the pastoral countryside of old to cities as people moved in order to find work, only to discover that perhaps paying jobs were not as abundant as they had previously hoped. Buildings, side by side left the horizon generally invisible, and so their worlds shrunk and the fight for survival returned in the form of grueling searched for paying work.

Now, the metaphorical jungles that human beings once were so sure that they had left ages before reappeared: but rather than trees and predators lurking in the foliage, they saw solid rows of tenements, smokestacks, and other people fighting for survival in the harsh climate of the city. In moving from villages to cities, communities of friends and neighbors were exchanged for foes and challengers, and the atmosphere, as we will see in Émile Zola's novel The Beast Within, caused people to begin to consider the idea that every person sought to usurp them and rob them of their hold, and everything they had worked for. Everybody must be the enemy.

Theories of the evolution of man as a beast separate from other beasts such as the one described above surely existed, and were not always entirely scientifically unfounded. In his essay '*The Golden Fly': Darwinism and Degeneration in Émile Zola's Nana*, Stephen McLean details the scientific thinking of the time, and how it often conformed with these ideas of a world without sympathy:

> Though initially reconciled with Victorian ideas of progress, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution provided considerable impetus for notions of degeneration. In *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880), the zoologist Ray Lankester emphasized the importance of degeneration in natural selection and even speculated on the decline of European civilization. Darwin himself uncovered the continuity between humans and animals, suggesting the capacity for *homo sapiens* to revert to its bestial origins. (McLean 62)

Charles Darwin himself hinted that man was fully capable of once again becoming a beast, although it's important to note McLean's use of the word "revert," meaning that

the belief was that Charles Darwin, despite his hand in the spark that set the beastly man theory ablaze during the naturalism movement, believed that man had indeed progressed beyond the animalistic nature of other beasts, despite their similar origins. However, the fact that man was an animal had already sunk in to the minds of many naturalist writers such as Émile Zola, and the relentless scientific approach to understanding human nature, in all its darkness and negativity, would be the louder voice. And that man had the capacity to return to his early state, "of nature," was much more obvious as a result of the incredibly negative effects of industrialization, and so man as beast became the harsh truth that the naturalist writers faced.

This is the world as seen by Émile Zola, and in his novel The Beast Within, published in 1890, he describes an exceedingly difficult terrain with many of his characters exemplifying the animalistic lack of reason or compassion that occurred as a result of self-interest. The same will to survive recognized by Darwin as one of the numerous factors of evolutionary processes. The main character of Zola's novel is Jacques, a train engineer and driver, and as we follow his life during the late nineteenth century (and not necessarily from his point of view), we develop a deep understanding of that world, and though constricted by our own inability to sympathize with actions committed without any reasoning or much thought, we find a very interesting (and disturbing) viewpoint of the state of affairs during that time period.

The economic tidal shift from farming in the pastoral countryside to steel working factories in cities, for Zola, seems to have caused the introduction of a new kind of beast to the landscape of France: something that industry could not exist without, and a new opportunity for movement and the new, industrialized livelihood of the people:

> The railway was like a giant creature, a colossus that lay sprawled across the country, its head in Paris, its backbone stretching the length of the main line, its arms and legs spreading out sideways along the branch lines and its hands and feet at Le Havre and at other towns it found its way to. On and on it went, soulless, triumphant, striding towards the future, straight as a die, willfully disregarding whatever shreds of humanity survived on either sides of it, hidden from view yet still clinging to their own hardy inner lives, their ceaseless round of passion and crime. (Zola 48)

The railway very clearly revolutionized industry and the way the world works, while industry made the railway possible. The two beasts fed off of one other, and were (and are) inexorably connected, so they could very well be considered one and the same. And Zola makes it abundantly clear how brooding of a presence that industry and its cold winding backbone make on the countryside and how it affects every creature in all of France to which it has sprawled its limbs. That the railway is a creature puts it on the same plane as human beings, prone to the same unreason and violent outbursts. And if it is a creature, it's like nothing the world has ever seen, and where, according to Darwin, organisms must have a niche in their environment to survive, this is something entirely different. Rather than being confined to a niche, the railway is sprawling over the entire landscape, spread flat like a fire blanket and extinguishing the life that lay beneath it, like the garden at the house at La Croix-de-Maufras, "which is cut in two by the railway line." (Zola 37) The fact that Zola has the train running through the center of a garden rather than splitting something like a forest in two is significant in that it displays how little control common people have over this new monster. While something "natural,"

normally signifies “the other,” or the one countering humanity in its fight for dominance, then it’s significant that the rail has so little appreciation for things like gardens, which are traditionally seen in a context of domestic beauty. The railway is an animal in its own way, and not beholden to humanity.

Gardens were also incredibly important to poets like William Wordsworth, as we’ve seen in the previous chapter, and in his poem *The Ruined Cottage* the garden is a symbol of a stable pastoral livelihood and a happy home. Split in two, the railway’s intentions disregard such beauty.

The garden and the “shreds of humanity” that “survived on either sides of it” seem to be very closely related to one another. This seems to be a nod by Zola to the romantics before him, before he furiously desecrates the old ideals of beauty in literature and poetry. Human beings invented the locomotive in order to more efficiently transport good and people and better serve the industry that allowed it to exist in the first place, and though it did exactly what it was meant to do, it had little respect for humanity and its morality. The idea that man is inherently greater than nature because of his ability to reason, as explicated by Rousseau in my first chapter, has been discarded by the invention itself. In this way, the locomotive has coaxed the beast back out of man, ergo the title of the novel, The Beast Within.

Even Zola’s prose in this passage seem to obey a kind of steady clanging, with short bursts of words forming simple phrases like a bell tolling. In the latter half of the above passage, the phrases become shorter, simpler, a list of one word at a time that simulates a more mechanical ticking, a repetitive production line, or even the knocking sound of the wheels of a locomotive with the same processes being repeated over and

over, unceasing and unchanging. In fact, the words "soulless" and "triumphant" could easily refer to the mode of work that a man or woman in a production line would experience, especially when compared to earlier work: being reduced to a gear in a clock and only focusing on one seemingly menial task, and never seeing the finished products or the fruits of one's labor.

But it seems that the final product, "the fruits one one's labor," bears little importance to the humans of Zola's world. They do menial tasks and live menial lives "hidden from view yet still clinging to their own hardy inner lives, their ceaseless round of passion and crime." (Zola 48) This phrase has a sort of meter to it, and the effect is the evocation of the poetry of the romantics, intentionally or not, that Zola sought to remove from his contemporary societal consciousness because of its inability to tell solid, difficult truths. Not only that, but the reversal is entirely plain: they no longer live outwardly but inwardly, and they cling to the old ideals not of elevation or morality but of reliance on subtlety, keeping their dark intentions and desires inside. The workers of his day had moved into smaller spaces, committing their time to smaller tasks and so their darker animalistic desires, as we see in Zola, had to be roped in in order to accommodate the mechanical world they inhabited. But the pressure valve had been blocked and the beasts within grow in strength beyond the capacity of their cages.

Zola's world was a dark one, and it stands out in harsh contrast to the romantics who wrote to blind themselves of the harsh world around them, those whose work pushed Zola to write what he saw as scathingly truthful depictions of industrialized France. Where many of the romantics immediately preceding his time turned their heads from the sadness they found in everyday life, Zola plunged himself headfirst into the world as he

knew it in order to explore the vast changes that were taking place and their enormous significance and implications. Following writers such as Lord Alfred Tennyson, who wrote the King Arthur epic poem, The Idylls of the King, which detailed a lost time of chivalric duty and courtly perfection, Zola's writing served to explicate the precise reasons for this escapism and yearning for the past, mainly the fact that the world was a harsh, unforgiving place. The way that many of the romantics viewed it, there had been an enormous degeneration of culture and human decency between the imaginary time periods that Tennyson's writing deals with and Zola's blackened world, the world that Zola would argue existed around them.

Where did this dreary view come from? Historically, the industrial revolution was indeed a time of widespread pollution and poor workers' rights. At the turn of the twentieth century, an economic shift had taken place, and further upheaval was happening at full speed and gaining momentum as industry replaced agriculture as the work for the masses. Leo Tolstoy, in one of his nonfiction writings, The Slavery of Our Times, published in 1900, writes extensively on the living conditions and the place of the worker in this new factory setting:

> There are English statistics showing that the average life among people of the upper classes is fifty-five years, and the average life among working people in unhealthy occupations is twenty-nine years.
>
> Knowing this (and we cannot help knowing it), we who take advantage of labour that costs human lives should one would think **(unless we are beasts)**, not be able to enjoy a moment's peace. But the fact is that we well-to-do people, liberals and humanitarians, very sensitive to the sufferings not of people only, but also of animals, unceasingly make use of such labour, and

> try to become more and more rich–that is, to take more and more advantage of such work. And we remain perfectly tranquil. (Tolstoy 18)

The economic shift from agriculture to factory fabrication could only benefit those who were already massively successful, or those few that could afford to open up a factory. While hopeful workers flocked to the cities, living stacked in tenements and suffering in an extremely polluted environment, more people desired some form of escapism: so many people yearned for the earth and soil, and the forests of the pastoral countryside of their youth. Tolstoy believes that not only is the massive, unyielding expenditure of human lives inhumane, but inhuman. He means to say that this new treatment of working men had opened a door within human consciousness that every enlightenment thinker and religious writer has fought so hard to bar shut: that human beings are once again allowing themselves to be "beasts," as if that is the only explanation for the working conditions of the lower class. This sort of sentiment surged to life after lying dormant and hidden for so many years, and Zola sought to capture and display that beast within man, because to deny its life was to deny the truth of the world as it was.

The economic shift from agriculture to industry quickly began to change every fundamental aspect of human life: not merely their livelihood, but the air they breathed and the world they saw and knew. Everything appeared to have changed, and despite the sad state of many manufacturing workers' lives, and the clear decline in quality of life for many of these workers, or perhaps as a way to justify it, there was a push to accept this new way of life as natural, because with Darwin's natural selection ideas in the social consciousness, it was hardly possible to convincingly separate anything that mankind does at all from the new concept of "natural."

> This wonderful blindness which befalls people of our circle can only be explained by the fact that when people behave badly they always invent a philosophy of life which represents their bad actions to be not bad actions at all, but merely results of unalterable laws beyond their control. In former times such a view of life was found in the theory that an inscrutable and unalterable will of God existed which foreordained to some men a humble position and hard work, and to others an exalted position and the enjoyment of the good things of life. (Tolstoy 23)

There could be no just or unjust in a natural world, and so through Charles Darwin's relatively new ideas on natural selection and evolution, the people who held the power to steer the lives of working people had to first free themselves from the shackles of humanity and morality in order to make maximum profit. What Tolstoy describes is something that could be referred to as "social Darwinism," or the application of the most basic understanding of Charles Darwin's theories of evolution, with emphasis almost exclusively on the phrase "survival of the fittest."

The concept of social "Darwinism" came about during a pivotal period in human history: it was a time when more than ever the wealthy few were able to amass capital at an unprecedented rate, while the working class struggled after working long hours. But as a result of the newly developed means of manufacture (that is, the invention of manufacturing plants), the process of hiring workers cheaply quickly became standard, and because many of them became disillusioned because of their plight, it felt as if they had been thrust back into the jungle, left to fight for themselves while their bosses thrived and conquered.

The tenants of social Darwinism, as a rule, tend to create a bleak and violent world, and this is something we become fully immersed in while reading naturalist writers that sought to expose that world, and show its readers exactly how living in that situation could be, such as Émile Zola. The Beast Within is a multi-layered canvas that details a highly industrialized world, with hulking locomotives as the driving force behind nearly every character's violent actions. We've come to understand this vaguely in the context of locomotives "disregarding whatever shreds of humanity survived on either sides of [them,]" but throughout the novel we frequently get to witness the effects on the decay of humanity. Because the novel is a murder mystery following both killers and detectives, we witness both blind, reasonless murders and attempts to understand them through broken logic. In her article entitled *Zola and Monet*, Marian S. Robinson forms a brief synopsis of the murders rather well:

> Each climactic episode of violence or lust is inextricably bound up with the engine and the physical presence of the railway. Of the violent deaths in the novel—and the novel is among other things a psychological study of crime and punishment—three are directly connected with the train: the murder of President Grandmorin, the suicide of Flore, and the accidental death of Jacques. The fourth, the murder of Séverine, is triggered by the roar of the passing train, and the fifth is that of the engine La Lison herself.
>
> (Robinson 65)

Zola's novel suggests that the appearance of the railway not only coincided with the bestial uprising in humans, but was a considerable factor in its awakening. Train lines seem to have changed people profoundly, and the switch was a cause of vertigo that

caused people like Jacques to fall in love with machinery. Jacques specifically ends up taking his locomotive as a sort of mistress, and unlike actual human beings, that train is able to quell his animalistic behavior.

> The only times he felt relaxed, happy and at ease with the world were when he was driving his locomotive. When he was being hurtled along at full speed, with his ears ringing from the din of the wheels, with his hand on the regulator and his eyes fixed on the line ahead watching out for signals, his mind was at rest… This was why he loved his locomotive as he did; it was like a mistress, soothing him and bringing him only happiness. (Zola 58 – 59)

Jacques's has an obvious love affair with his work, in fact his work is the only thing that enables him to be a relatively well-adjusted individual, at least compared to who he would be without it, and gives him the ability and speak to other people. However, it seems that the train has its own intentions, because it also causes him to murderous rage. Zola's use of the passive voice in Jacques's movement, "being hurtled along," allow us to see quite clearly who controls who, and which of them has the power in any given situation. He has allowed the locomotive to take his life utterly: he seems to no longer have any control over his own fate, which, for the romantic poets and in particular William Wordsworth's "working paradise" ideal, would be considered the least enjoyable thing possible, the antithesis of a fulfilling life. The shepherd has been lost. Jacques, however, has little outside of his life as an engineer, and indeed, aside from his incredibly violent outbursts that occasionally end in murder, he isn't particularly like an animal, or what we would call animalistic in contemporary terms. In the very least, he doesn't at all obey the cornerstones of Charles Darwin's survival of the fittest ideal,

except in that he is almost constantly on the edge of killing another human being. Zola might argue that though humans don't consciously act in order to assert their own dominance over others, it's instinct rather than intention that defines beasts. Reversing Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea that I outline in the previous chapter—where he defines man as a creature with the ability to reason rather than act on instinct—Zola's view solidifies man as merely another animal. Like Charles Darwin before him, Zola believed that man must be more like animals than previously thought, and therefore acting on instinct to secure one's place is much more likely. With Darwin's theory clearly visible among humans, man could no longer deny that he is an animal like any other, and therefore he should no longer attempt to hide it. In his Experimental Novel (1881) Zola details that it is now art's duty to bring to full view of which we are now fully aware, but would be more comfortable were they invisible:

> I am waiting, finally, until the evolution accomplished in the novel takes place on the stage; until they return to the source of science and modern arts, to the study of nature, to the anatomy of man, to the painting of life, in an exact reproduction, more original and powerful than anyone has so far dared to place upon boards.
>
> (Zola 143)

While talking specifically of the theater in this passage, Zola is highlighting that what naturalism has done for novels by writers such as himself have yet to be done on the stage, and that it must be contemporized or it is doomed. But more importantly, this passage does an excellent job of explaining the purpose of naturalism as a whole, and more specifically Zola's novels. The fact that Zola favors art as "a study of nature" and

"an exact reproduction" is particularly shocking when one takes into account just how violent Zola's novels can be, because that in turn shows us the world as he has witnessed it: if his novels are a literal representation, then it is a truly harsh world.

Looking back to Zola's The Beast Within, the main character Jacques's actions seem, at first glance, to coincide to social Darwinistic tendencies. As a result of industrialization and in particular the locomotive he worships, Jacques has lost almost every semblance of humanity and more resembles a feral beast than a human being. So much so that someone such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau would either be forced to turn a blind eye to such a horrid specimen and find another example for the vast difference between man and beast, or he might be forced to reconsider his views of the nature of man.

Jacques is hardly a pure beast, though, and he is at best self-destructive rather than self-interested. One of the corner stones of Darwin's theory of natural selection deals with sexual selection, or the ability to reproduce in higher numbers, among many other variables. More importantly, Jacques might be incredibly violent and that may have labeled him as a beast, but animals must reproduce in order to succeed, and he seems to be mostly repulsed by the idea. Faced with sexual intimacy with Flore, a person who can only be called a nymph (when Jacques walks in on her, he remembers that she always used to bathe in the river), Jacques does not act like any sort of animal, but rather as a psychopath:

> But he did not take her. He drew back, gasping for breath, looking at her. He seemed to be possessed; some wild impulse made him look around him for a weapon, a stone, anything that he might use to kill her. (Zola 55)

This is, at best, a horrible hybrid of multiple animalistic characteristics acting all at once, in unison. On the verge of mating, Jacques reels back and has an overwhelming desire to kill her, but instead he pulls himself together and runs off. This is contradictory to Darwin's ideas of self-preservation, and recall the idea of "degeneration" that I went over much earlier in this piece. Jacques is hardly a sexual animal, but something else entirely. He is a character whose breath resembles the steam of a locomotive: like the chugging of a steam engine, Jacques is moving away from her with his eyes stuck as if on a track. Jacques is a beast, but not an animal any more than a locomotive would be. Just prior to the scene, Flore asks him: "is it true that the only thing you're in love with is your locomotive," which, as we know, is an obvious truth, because for him, his train is as good as a mistress.

She also points out that Jacques spends his time with his locomotive "polishing it and making it look shiny," (Zola 53) hinting simultaneously that Jacques treats his train as a lover, and that he overworks himself. Max Nordeau, a contemporary of Zola's despite their distaste for one another explains in his piece on degeneracy the changes that the industrial revolution brought about on the individual level, writing:

> All these activities, however, even the simplest, involve an effort of the nervous system and a wearing of the tissue. Every line we read or write, every human face we see, every conversation we carry on, every scene we perceive through the window of the flying express, sets in activity our sensory nerves and our brain centers. Even the little shocks of railway travelling, not perceived by consciousness, the perpetual noises, and the various sights in the streets of a large town, our

> suspense pending the sequel of progressing events, the constant expectation of the newspaper, of the postman, of the visitor, cost our brains wear and tear. In the last fifty years the population of Europe has not doubled, whereas the sum of its labors has increased tenfold, in part even fifty-fold. Every civilized man furnishes, at the present time, from five to twenty-five times as much work as was demanded of him half a century ago. (Nordau 39)

Nordau is explaining the way in which his idea of degeneration is taking place, and the inevitability of the return of man to his beastly form. Jacques is merely a sick man inflicted with the industrial disease, and has broken down as a result of the rapid change that has taken place around him. He is a symbol of the heavily overworked industrial man, and he even though Nordau goes on to detail how this will lead to the fall of western civilization, his theories are ever-present in The Beast Within.

Though Jacques is not one of the unlucky masses who are forced to maintain unfulfilling jobs on production lines in order to survive, and in fact he's quite lucky in that he loves his occupation, his mental state and actions that pervade the novel exemplify the state of mind of the times. No longer hopeful romantics, writers such as Émile Zola felt that they couldn't delude themselves into believing that a bright outlook was possible, and that literature had a social obligation to state the truth. This was the truth that Zola witnessed daily in mechanized France: a country industrialized to further stretch the divide between man and nature, which would backfire as a result of inhuman work and thus dragging the savagery of the beast into what could have been a purely human space. The city is not a utopia for Zola, but in years to come, as human beings became accustomed to the mechanized world, the shreds of humanity that the

locomotives left behind would sprout and flourish in vacant lots and in back alleys, and soon enough humanity would once again rise above the idea of a beast as a reasonless creature, and become once more an animal of reason.

Chapter III

True Human Nature, in Nature: John Steinbeck's Compassionate Creatures and their Habitats

On the other side of the Atlantic and twelve years after Zola's Beast Within was published, John Steinbeck was born into the blackened world of the Industrial Age, and having no memory of a time without mass production, and no thought of a time without machines, "adapting" to the industrial-era lifestyle was no difficult feat. Born in Salinas, California, incidentally the same year of Zola's death in 1902, Steinbeck grew up in a rural town with some of the world's most fertile farmland, but through a simple reading of many of his works, it's quite apparent that he never believed that a machine, such as a Model T Ford or a locomotive could be an evil thing, because they merely served human interests, and so the hands in which those contrivances found themselves fully dictated the purpose they would serve. A gun could feed a family or destroy one, and locomotives allowed men, women, and children to move across the vast country that is the United States, not merely obsessing lonely men to the point of insanity, driving them back to their bestial origins and murderous rage.

For many people in the United States during the introduction of the steam engine, it wasn't understood that it would revolutionize industry. However, as early as its introduction at the start of the industrial revolution,[1] American philosophers such as Thomas Jefferson began to theorize about how the new invention could revolutionize the

[1] Generally placed between the mid eighteenth century and nineteenth century.

workforce, and reduce the amount of labor wasted on menial tasks. As Leo Marx puts it in his 1964 book of literary criticism, The Machine in the Garden:

> 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 rivers, and, all in all, helping to transform a wilderness into a society of the middle landscape. At the bottom it is the intensity of his belief in the land, as a locus of both economic and moral value, which prevents him from seeing what the machine portends for America. (Marx 150)

Jefferson saw none of the evil that could come of such an invention, and in line with his extremely positive belief that well-informed citizens would make the best possible decisions, he held an overwhelmingly optimistic view of just exactly how such equipment would revolutionize the workforce. And the fact that Jefferson "assumes that it will blend harmoniously into the open countryside of his native land" seems to suggest that he believed that something like the steam engine could be no different from a tent: it's merely a means to an end, and its use could be incredibly advantageous. Jefferson seems to believe that morality derived from the land will be a driving force in both pushing forward and ensuring that the scenes from Zola's dreary world will never happen. But, as we know, Jefferson never lived to see the world as Zola did, and died before industry could wreak that havoc on the poor of the United States, despite his belief in the morality of the land.

This belief that land will ensure American morality in terms of the use of machinery can't be considered merely of Thomas Jefferson's mind, nor his time: land, being incredibly important to the American consciousness, likely in part due to the vast amount of it, sets the United States apart from the countries I've discussed in previous chapters: France and Great Britain. The context of the United States vast land reserves gave the citizenry the ability to claim huge portions of land to work: Rousseau and Paine's belief that land ownership would inevitably lead to people fighting for a stake in the ground, which I went over in the first chapter, perhaps would no longer be applicable in this new, vast untouched land. Morality could take hold because human beings did no have to fight each other to earn a living. If that's true, then machinery could help each human being in their own realms, morally stable and allowing workers more time to think rather than merely working oneself into the ground.

Of course, it's plain that automation never did fulfill the fantasies of philosophers like Thomas Jefferson, and although it did revolutionize the workforce, it did so in a profoundly morally void fashion, causing writers like Emile Zola to quickly abandon the idealized image of a fulfilling life comparable to the "working paradise" detailed by the poet William Wordsworth. By Steinbeck's time, as a direct result of the industrial revolution (or more specifically the machinery that drastically reduced the cost of labor), hopes of finding contentment in ones work shifted into necessity: or how much exactly one must toil in order to gain a living wage. And, on the American side of the Atlantic some writers borrowed from—or perhaps grew into—the ideas of founding fathers such as Jefferson, whether accidentally or purposely. Because many of Thomas Jefferson's ideas on the natural state of humanity were either inspired by the land or directly

influenced the beliefs of the American populace, contentment in work through industry became a hopeful part of the American consciousness. For John Steinbeck specifically, this meant writing about travellers and bums, farmers working too much and receiving too little, and hobos doing work where work was needed, but only when necessary. The protagonists of Steinbeck's novels are of the masses that can no longer afford to live and survive by merely tending to their crops: they are ejected from the workforce, for the most part wholly against their will because their work does afford them security and contentment. They find food when and where they can, and in a way, try to live as contently as possible given their circumstances.

Steinbeck's protagonists reflect the American tradition as exemplified by that Jeffersonian ideal in that they tend to approach machinery—such as broken down Model-Ts and boilers—in a fashion not dissimilar from the way that the romantics would approach a piece of natural beauty: by communicating with it directly. Machinery in Steinbeck's novels stand out in harsh contrast against their representations in Emile Zola's novel The Beast Within, where they're presented as horrid monsters sucking the humanity out of the land bit by bit. Perhaps they've merely had time to assimilate into the environment, but in any case it'd be difficult to make the claim that objects of industry maintain the same sort of evil, plotting sentiment for Steinbeck as they have for Zola. In fact, for Steinbeck they've blended into the scenery in a way that the other writers I've discussed earlier couldn't imagine possible: when human beings and nature are profoundly different and separated, how can man's production be categorized as "natural?" And yet for Steinbeck's characters, the connection is as spiritual as Wordsworth's connection to the beauty of the "natural" world.

The Beast Within detailed how the industrial-era machinery had the ability to completely overwhelm the workers and people of the time because the newly introduced machinery changed their lives in a way that was inescapable, shockingly fast and unceasing: the gears would spin, and the mechanic would chase it around and oil it, to make it run more efficiently and effectively, only exacerbating the work he must do to keep it running. This sort of machinery would indeed revolutionize the workforce and reduce the demand for labor, consolidating numerous jobs into one that one would contain the stresses and duties of every worker wrapped in a tidy package. However, it would present itself as a deceptively simple list of tasks and maintenance that would somehow cause people such as the main character of Zola's novel to completely lose his humanity, eventually reverting back to a kind of bestial state without a grain of compassion left in him, as I've outlined in the previous chapter.

The first step to contentment, therefore, would logically be to abandon machinery and the progress, as Thomas Jefferson would define it, that industrialization did offer, which effectively set people backwards in development of both humanity and morality, and what exactly set human beings apart from everything else, such as we've seen in Zola. If technology's only use was its ability to act as a catalyst in the dehumanization of society, deconstruction of that vein of industrialization would be the only real option. However, as the twentieth century American naturalist Aldo Leopold explains in his exploration of the utility and morality of modern conveniences: occasionally machinery can sometimes help us focus on nature rather than having to deal with utilities. To do so, he cites two well-known American naturalists and conservationists who were actively

slowing the development of natural resources, but did so despite their use of modern tools:

> Roosevelt did not disdain the modern rifle; White used freely the aluminum pot, the silk tent, dehydrated foods. Somehow they used mechanical aids, in moderation, without being used by them. (Leopold 181)

It's apparent from this perspective that the use of "mechanical aids," as Leopold puts it, are not merely corrupting agents. From this, we can draw that perhaps this harmony between industry and nature is not only possible without descending into an industrial-type madness as we've seen previously in Zola, but that moderate use of these tools can allow human beings to better enjoy nature, so long as there isn't any sort of fixation on material objects.

By Leopold's time, the world had already seen this fixation growing at an unprecedented rate, as clearly displayed by Zola's Jacques and his wicked attachment to his locomotive. So Steinbeck sought a compromise: through a reading of his novels we can see a vague rejection of the desire to return to the romantic idea of the shepherd, but because movement to a less technologically advanced age is both impossible, and as I've said in the first chapter, Rousseau believed that such a return could only be for the worst. Rather, Steinbeck sought his own version of a "working paradise," perhaps as a result of the Great Depression, and the great loss of jobs that it caused, and the image of the homeless vagabond or the migratory worker took the place of a contented shepherd. These hobos were people who were generally forcibly removed from their homes for some reason or another likely linked to the stock market collapse, or more likely the Dust Bowl of the twenties, and by living in Steinbeck's version of a "working paradise,"

develop a bond with the earth and their countrymen in different fashion than we've seen in Wordsworth. However, he breaks on a vital point: Steinbeck's compromise must incorporate machinery, and does so by blending it into the contemporary landscape just like Jefferson fantasized nearly two hundred years earlier.

This concept of machinery "blending into the landscape" is something that Steinbeck does extensively, and more often than not it's used in order to illustrate the beauty of becoming one with the land through something as simple as losing one's job—and the same goes for machinery. For instance, in Cannery Row, Steinbeck's novel published in 1945 about the characters of a Great Depression-era industrial town, there is a brief chapter about a man and wife who, after losing work, are evicted from their home and find a new one in an old, disposed boiler left in a vacant lot:

> The boiler looked like an old fashioned locomotive without wheels… Gradually it became red and soft with rust and gradually the mallow weeds grew up around it and the flaking rust fed the weeds. Flowering myrtle crept up its sides and the wild anise perfumed the air about it. Then someone threw out a datura root and the thick fleshy tree grew up and the great white bells hung down over the boiler door and at night the flowers smelled of love and excitement… In 1935 Mr. and Mrs. Sam Malloy moved into the boiler. The tubing was all gone now and it was a roomy, dry, and safe apartment… you couldn't want a dryer, warmer place to stay. (Steinbeck 48 – 49)

The boiler is an old, used and discarded piece of equipment left to rust in a lot by some factory owner. Firstly, the comparison that Steinbeck makes to an "old fashioned locomotive," in the context of this argument, is quite remarkable because it is reminiscent

of Zola, wherein the locomotive was partially symbolic of the workman's descent into animalistic madness and murder, as well as being a vital part of the new environment. But here, discarded and rendered useless by deconstruction, "without wheels," it's a safe space for a couple removed from their home as a result of joblessness. They are without any great income, and yet they are content.

However, the most striking characteristic of the metallic mass is its relationship to its environment: while a product of the industrial revolution, it's able to become part of an ecosystem rather quickly, with its "flaking rust feeding the weeds." Bits of the boiler flake off, and the earth returns the favor by lending beauty in the form of flowers and vines, accepting it as part of nature. In this passage, it's clear that not only can the products of industry coexist with the natural world, but the two aspects feed off one another, each enhancing the other. As a piece of garbage disposed, the boiler is much more than a mere water heating system: it's a home and a literal source of nutrition for the plant life surrounding it. Even the tree growing in front of it, the datura that completes the image of the enormous iron "bulb," is a product of being tossed out as trash. This theme of refuse sprouting and growing into something much more important will continue throughout the novel, such as when Mack and the boys recover an old vehicle that seemingly had not a bit of life left in it, or the fact that their drink of choice is an amalgamation of every abandoned, half finished drink in a certain bar, passages I'll delve into later in this chapter.

Once Mr. and Mrs. Sam Malloy become settled, neither of them so much as think of working because they're content where they are: for the jobless inhabitants of Cannery Row, that's enough. This applies to the main characters of the novel perhaps more than

anyone. Mack and the boys are a group of men with varying backgrounds in work and idleness who have all left their old lives to live as bums and hobos, and who are generally well-liked in the town for their genuine personalities. Steinbeck's description of them when we first meet them is incredibly telling:

> They are the Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties of the hurried mangled craziness of Monterey and the cosmic Monterey where men in fear and hunger destroy their stomachs in the fight to secure certain food, where men hungering for love destroy everything lovable about them. Mack and the boys are the Beauties, the Virtues, the Graces. In the world ruled by tigers with ulcers, rutted by strictured bulls, scavenged by blind jackals, Mack and the boys dine delicately with the tigers, fondle the frantic heifers, and wrap up the crumbs to feed the sea gulls of Cannery Row. What can it profit a man to gain the whole world and to come to his property with a gastric ulcer, a blown prostate, and bifocals? (Steinbeck 15)

Steinbeck describes their personalities not with adjectives but with their relationship to other human beings in the world, and by describing the juxtaposition between the two vastly different bodies. It seems strange, though, that in the first half of this passage Steinbeck focuses not on who Mack and the boys are, but on the malignance of the standard viewpoint of living in that era, from the perspective of Mack and the boys. The effect of this tactic is immediate: it's forcing the reader to sympathize with the idle inhabitants of Cannery Row.

At the same time, however, Steinbeck notes an important character trait of Mack and the boys, which is having pity rather than anger and frustration at the "tigers, bulls and jackals." By "dining delicately, fondling, and "wrapping up the crumbs to feed the

sea gulls," they become more than just a group of homeless men or lazy hobos, and combined with the capitalized "Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties," Mack and they boys begin to seem homeless in the same way that the Buddha was homeless, or poor in the same way that Jesus was poor: by choice. And the more we hear about them, the more their state and more a trait of some form of enlightenment seems less like a disability or unfortunate accident. Because they don't drive themselves to death working, they gain an entirely different status. During the period that Steinbeck was writing, the choice made by Mack and the boys would be far from acceptable, and the people in their state would be expected to obey the American ideal of picking oneself up to standing, so the choice to write them in as "Virtues, Graces, and Beauties" is completely necessary if Steinbeck's contemporaries are to sympathize with them, which is the reason that the triplicate of capitalized nouns is repeatedly used to describe them.

While many of the run-down men and women in Cannery Row do enjoy the presence or at least the existence of Mack and the boys, there are other human beings who completely refuse to sympathize:

> Mack and the boys avoid the trap, walk around the poison, step over the noose while a generation of trapped, poisoned, trussed-up men scream at them and call them no-goods, come-to-bad-ends, blots-on-the-town, thieves, rascals, bums. Our Father who art in nature, who has given the gift of survival to the coyote, the common brown rat, the English sparrow, the house fly and the moth, must have a great and overwhelming love for no-goods and blots-on-the-town and bums, and Mack and the boys. Virtues and graces and laziness and zest. Our Father who art in nature. (Steinbeck 15)

The first half of this passage makes the case that Mack and the boys are only disliked because they've "avoided the traps" of modern society, and they live free of constraints and poor health. The angry men are those who seem to have ended up like Jacques of The Beast Within, angry as some kind of animal, who are "trapped, poisoned" and "trussed up" like prey or some kind of rodent. These people are not entirely absent from Steinbeck's worldview, but are in the background, very much alive. They too are animals, but Steinbeck, in introducing those that refuse to work for money, also creates the image of a new type of human animal, though Steinbeck would have thought the phrase redundant. Indeed, unlike Zola, who posits that men are becoming beasts once more in the negative sense, Steinbeck believes that all human beings are inseparable from the creatures of the world, and that this isn't necessarily a bad thing, nor should it be considered so.

The second half of this passage, beginning and ending with "Our Father who art in nature," puts Mack and the boys into a wider perspective: from the narrow idea of the definition of "human nature" to just "nature," they are just animals like any other, and are merely of a different breed. Through comparing Mack and the boys to sparrows, houseflies and moths, Steinbeck is refuting the idea that people are any different from any other creature in the animal kingdom. And the phrase that Steinbeck put at both the beginning and the ending of the quotation like a prayer, "Our Father who art in nature" is immensely important because it highlights Steinbeck's assertion that belief and religion, once so tied to the idea that nature exists to serve humanity (especially in the Christian tradition, which is what this phrase is paraphrasing) must apply to much more than generally held: nature and Our Father are inextricably tied to one another. And this idea

harks back to thoughts on Darwinian evolution: Steinbeck's beliefs in evolution do not, like we've seen in Zola, negatively impact his view of humanity, merely because it proves that we are animals. Instead, Steinbeck is asserting the fact that evolution enhances his view of humanity. For instance, in the passage above, we see a kind of wonder so long associated with biologists studying the variances in the animals of the natural world. Steinbeck attaches that same belief in variance and wonder to human beings.

The person who helped set the beauty of nature and evolution into Steinbeck's mind was his friend Ed Ricketts, who was quite the famous marine biologist in Steinbeck's lifetime, and the two were very close. Ricketts was the one of the causes of Steinbeck's fascination with Charles Darwin in particular, as well as his other scientific interests,[2] likely one of the reasons that he wrote about the undeniable animal nature of humanity, for human beings are, by definition, a part of nature. Mack and the boys exemplify this idea in both their descriptions and their natures, which are justified by Steinbeck's comparison between the group of hobos and various creatures.

> …Darwin's thinking reminds us of the Ricketts/Steinbeck desire to see the parts of something before reaching conclusions, to observe that the parts are all related even if we cannot perceive the connections, and to recognize that it is delusive to see man as anything but an integral part of the natural order. (Railsback 30)

[2] Steinbeck and Ricketts went on a voyage together in order to replicate Charles Darwin's journey on the Beagle: a trip that inspired him to write The Log from the Sea of Cortez.

Ed Ricketts was essential in planting the idea of man as an animal in Steinbeck's head, and so he was written into Cannery Row as the Doc: the vital character about whom Steinbeck writes: "Everyone who knew him was indebted to him. And everyone who thought of him thought next, 'I really must do something nice for Doc.'" (Steinbeck 29) In fact, this sentiment is precisely what drives the plot of the novel, after those exact words are echoed in the mouths of Mack and the boys, sending them on a trail to make money in order to buy goods to throw Doc a party.

The phrase "I really must do something…" rarely, if ever, shows up especially from the mouths of Mack and the boys. From their distaste for meaningful careers, the fact that they feel a strong obligation to do something for the Doc means he must have some kid of profound importance to them, for it drives them to make an exception. To understand that importance, we must first begin to understand who exactly the Doc is, and what his role is in Cannery Row.

The Doc is known for giving great advice to anybody he speaks to, and he runs a store called "Western Biological," which Steinbeck describes as if he has been there and loves the memory:

> Western Biological deals in strange and beautiful wares. It sells the lovely animals of the sea, the sponges, tunicates, anemones, the stars and buttlestars, and sun stars, the bivalves, barnacles, the worms and shells, the fabulous and multiform little brothers, the living moving flowers of the sea… bugs and snails and spiders… little unborn humans, some whole and other sliced thin and mounted on slides… You can order anything from Western Biological and sooner or later you will get it. (Steinbeck 25-26)

The Doc makes his living explicitly selling creatures of the natural world, which Mack and the boys are so inexplicably tied to, so it seems strange that they would regard him so highly. Doc sells multitudes, and Steinbeck's use of the list form with numerous very similar creatures set side by side juxtaposed against wildly different creatures suggests that not only is he just scratching at the surface and attempting to get a vague overview of the things that one can buy in Western Biological, but that there is a wider array that anyone but a learned marine biologist could possibly know. If these marine wonders were colors, Doc has all the primaries, secondaries, and every hue between them. But he doesn't merely sell animals and those creatures that people at the time would consider largely different from human beings, or in a different realm of existence entirely, but the fact that he also sells human beings, albeit merely fetuses, gives us great insight into Doc's character: he, like Steinbeck, believes that "it is delusive to see man as anything but an integral part of the natural order." (Railsback 30) This likely has to do with the fact that Doc's inspiration, Ed Ricketts, was the mentor that taught Steinbeck of that unseverable connection. However, this portrayal in the novel plays a vital role in understanding why exactly Mack and the boys so appreciate him as a human being and as a scientist: because Mack and the boys know that the Doc sees them for the wondrous and interesting animals and character that they really are, and not what they should be by societal standards.

The description of the Doc continues later in the same chapter, when Steinbeck continues along this path:

> … his face is half Christ and half satyr and his face tells the truth. It is said that he helps many a girl out of one trouble and into another… Doc tips his hat to dogs as

> he drives by and the dogs look up and smile at him. He can kill anything for need but he could not even hurt a feeling for pleasure. (Steinbeck 28)

Of course Doc's treatment of dogs is similar to his treatment of Mack and the boys, and from what we know about him, this sort of behavior is not to be considered disrespectful to Mack, the boys, nor the dogs. He has a consistent respect for life in the most general sense.

Respect and compassion for life is why Steinbeck creates his image in a double-headed, many-faced form. Like the wares in his shop, he contains multitudes: composed of both Christ and the Satyr. The two figures represent two modes of thought, two time periods and two ways of viewing the world that are fundamentally different and separate from one another. Christ, the symbol of humility and love towards other human beings and the Satyr, a mixture of goat and human being that is usually associated with pagan gods of the land and nature such as Pan. And if we consider Jefferson's idea of the "morality of the land," Doc's obsession with the natural world only made him better and more morally correct.

Further, Steinbeck's choice of mixing these two extremely different figures paints the Doc as a sort of otherworldly being, yet one that is so deeply of this world, part of the landscape and of its people and creatures that he seems to exist outside of everything else, outside of the conceived spheres of existence: not part of the animalistic world of the marine animals he studies, nor the coyote world of Mack and the Boys, and certainly not of the "proper" world of bankers and landlords and farmers. With his chosen profession, the Doc is able to move between spheres freely, and because this is plain to everyone he encounters, his presence demands respect.

Further, this is precisely the reason that his living, which is gained exclusively by selling creatures and animals and the "natural world" wholesale does not conflict with his Satyr and Christ-like status: being able to move freely between spheres gives him the unique capability of knowing each, and thus much of his desire to sell such things is fueled by a need to educate others, or to spread interest, to display proudly the various spheres: indeed, there isn't much more use for his shop other than those purposes. He spreads the "morality of the land" in a context fitting the century in which he exists: if Doc's goal was to spread his ideas in the twentieth century United States, he could have been a salesman or a preacher, pasting up billboards with catchy sales slogans or animatedly spreading his belief through an interpretation of a religious text. But his work deals exclusively in nature, and he is content making sure other beings are content in any way he can.

The Doc developed to fit the space between the preacher and the salesman, selling knowledge and ideas. He is acting as a kind of messiah of nature: the leader of Mack and the boys who make up his moth-like disciples, swarming unknowingly around his light. Doc, selling education and his belief of the importance of the natural world and humans' place in it while the Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties kept their ideas for themselves, and occasionally from themselves.

Because Mack and the boys have fit themselves into the land rather than fitting the land around them, they are the Virtues, the Graces, the Beauties. They have taken Jefferson's "morality of the land" ideal and lived it. Out of sight, they still function as the saints of nature and the battered and disposed members of the world. They welcome with open arms the dejected and those that find no joy in working any longer. Similarly,

because they see no great divide between machinery and the rest of the natural world, when they do work they do so just as hard to save a manufactured product if it promises to repay them in any way it can. In one instance, Mack and the boys found an old disposed furnace; an enormous iron monster. It was a long distance away from their home, but the disposed thing could be of such great use to them if they were able to get it there, and so they sought the help of the other human beings in the area, and none of them would reduce themselves to go out of the way to help them move it because they owed them nothing and could gain nothing from helping them with the move:

> … only when they realized that no one was going to take this stove home for them did they begin to carry it. It took them three days to carry it to Cannery Row, a distance of five miles, and they camped beside it at night. But once installed in the Palace Flophouse it was the glory and the hearth and the center…With the great stove came pride, and with pride, the Palace became home. (Steinbeck 41)

It would surely be a stretch to assert that the carrying of the stove was an act of mercy for the furnace on Mack and the boys' part. However, one must account for the extraordinary effort that the men put into it, especially because these same men never work when they don't deem it entirely necessary. But with this stove, once they realized that it would never be done if they didn't put in the effort themselves, they resigned themselves to work constantly to carry it an enormous distance for as long as it would take to get it there, all because they knew that the work would be afford them an incredible payoff: they would never have to be cold again. This type of reason for work harks back to the reasons for working as detailed by Wordsworth's shepherd in his working paradise.

However, as I've said before, the fit wouldn't be perfect without the changes or the contemporary style of the figure that Steinbeck's offers. For Mack and the boys, this industrialized world wrought sour by the Great Depression is ideal: they have evolved to live in that niche, therefore, trying to find other people to do work for them is part of their character.

Once the task is completed, however, there is no longer any doubt: they are prideful and comfortable, like a homesteader who has just finished storing adequate food and firewood before the first snowfall of the winter season. They have welcomed the massive boiler into their home, and now as thanks, it will keep them warm and cook their food for them, and it life will be greatly prolonged. Indeed, every instance in which Mack and the boys utilize a piece of machinery, never does one single person profit. This is an important distinction to make, especially during the time in which the novel takes place: when hordes of people were working for richer men in industrial factories, and often at the loss of life and limb by the workers, Steinbeck curates scenarios in which man works in tandem with machinery at nobody's loss. For instance, when Mack and the boys agree to help the Doc in the form of gathering frogs for his store, they realize that they require a mode of transportation to carry them to the pond and the frogs back with them.

And once again, when the need arises, Mack and the boys happen upon used and broken piece of machinery discarded in a vacant lot. The owner of this particular piece of machinery, a Model T Ford, also is the owner and fulltime shopkeeper of the neighborhood grocery store, Lee Chong. Lee Chong, like many other people in the town, has a parasitic/symbiotic relationship with Mack and the boys: they live in a shed owned by him in exchange for keeping the windows unbroken and his shop free of antagonists.

Lee Chong took the broken Model T in exchange for groceries, but never had the ability or the need to fix it, and so it rusted in the lot near the shop. So, seeing something that seems to fit exactly into their need, Mack and the boys sought it out and promised to fix it up in exchange for allowing them to use it: the Doc would get his frogs, Mack and the boys would be able to throw their party for the Doc, and Lee Chong would finally have that old discarded Model T in working condition.

The process of fixing the Model T could even be considered akin to a spiritual experience that the Romantic poets would have with nature, especially because of the way the two bodies communicate. One of the boys is an "ex-mechanic" named Gay—a man who is so incredibly good at his job, and yet has no desire to work for anyone but himself:

> He was such a wonder, Gay was—the little mechanic of God, the St. Francis of all things that turn and twist and explode, the St. Francis of coils and armatures and gears. And if at some time all the heaps of jalopies, cut-down Dusenburgs, Buicks, De Sotos and Plymouths, American Austins and Isotta-Fraschinis praise God in a great chorus—it will be largely due to Gay and his brotherhood. (Steinbeck 66)

This is one of the most important passages in the entire novel concerning both man's connection with nature and the machine, and it details how, in the twentieth century, the overlapping between industry and earth is inevitable: St. Francis is, in all likelihood, referring to the Saint Francis of Assisi, who, like many catholic Saints, left a life of luxury in order to pursue a holier life of asceticism. He chose to become impoverished and a beggar, much like Mack and the boys. He is most remembered for his affinity for nature and animals, so Gay's being described as "the St. Francis of coils of all things that

run and twist and explode" is directly referring to the inseparability of the two spheres: or rather, how there aren't two spheres at all, and nature, man and machine all exist within the same world and are therefore of the same matter.

Steinbeck's choice of using the word "heaps," as well as Gay's ability to fix cars that are seemingly destroyed and discarded seems to suggest the idea that only the downtrodden will truly be saved by the Saint, and thus they "praise God in a great chorus." This not only nods to the machine as a natural part of the new American landscape, but refers to the idea that only those who live ascetically are truly living correctly, meaning people like Mack and the boys or similar. However, they make up a small niche in a vast environment: not everyone can live off waste, there must be producers as well.

The United States represents a relatively new scene in general, and perhaps the machine—that beast that wreaked such havoc on the other side of the Atlantic ocean, forcing Wordsworth to turn to nature and immerse himself entirely, unsettling Zola so much that he assumed its addition would turn people to the most vicious of beasts—was easily assimilated into the fresh new landscape, but only by those few who decided to take the idea of "reduced manpower" seriously. People like Mack and the boys did not reject the machine, and they profited not only because it allowed them not to work nearly as often, but because it instigated a culture of waste: those objects disposed which could be utilized with a positive outlook. They are the Beauties, the Graces, the Virtues because they are modern St. Francises, and because of their need to live life ascetically, surviving on the waste of others and thriving and living contentedly, harming none and requiring little. The development of industrial machinery created a niche for them, and they can

survive because of the perceived abundance created by it, viewed by many of their contemporaries as waste and refuse, and yet they live their lives happier than most. Steinbeck looked at the homeless, vagabond contented and didn't see a parasite on society, but a natural evolutionary occurrence: when a niche is created, it must be filled, and Mack and the boys are happier for it.

Conclusion

William Wordsworth imagined the life of a shepherd; a working paradise that he believed was slowly being wiped from civilized society. And less than a century later when Zola gives us his perspective we realize that it's not difficult to understand why. The natural world that human beings belonged to had become invisible or conquered by Zola's lifetime, and he saw people compensate for that loss by forgetting what human beings considered absolutely vital to their humanity, the one thing that separated them from beasts: their morality. With personhood rendered obsolete by industry in this way and the scientific understanding of evolution and the actual origins of human beings now unavoidably known, work became just another means to an end: there was no joy, merely a track, and the working paradise imagined by Wordsworth became no more than fantasy, and would have been decidedly written off by naturalist writers such as Émile Zola as romantic drivel.

The two authors Wordsworth and Zola lived in incredibly varied degrees of industrialization, and this informed their respective viewpoints on how industry was affecting the human ability to connect with nature. Wordsworth, born in 1770, around the start of the industrial revolution, lived during a period when pastoralism was still very much in the memories of his countrymen, and industry could not have been as developed as the cities Zola knew and lived in. For Zola, born in 1840, just ten years before the death of Wordsworth, the memory of a working paradise or a pastoral ideal was a distant

fantasy touted by hopeful grandfathers and romantics, but the writer's experience taught him that it was not only meaningless but detrimental to chase bright optimism in such a dreary world proven repeatedly to contain little, if any morality, and by extension, humanity.

As we've seen in the third period of industry after Zola's dark period of adjustment to industry, nature and factories have begun to reconcile their differences, and for John Steinbeck, born only a few months before Zola's death in 1902, industry, like human beings, were inseparable from "nature" as Wordsworth saw it, even if the combination had changed both. For Steinbeck, the twentieth century brought with it the idea of "old industry," and machinery that for Wordsworth and Zola would be new, but had since been discarded and abandoned. This is how Steinbeck reconciles industry and nature, and of course, human beings. Steinbeck, like Zola, believes that man and nature are inexplicably linked, though his theories are starkly more optimistic than Zola's. But by linking man and nature once more, and in the way he does, Steinbeck uncovers once more a reincarnation of Wordsworth's working paradise.

In the twenty first century, it's much easier to see how connected humans are to the world environment, and yet the shepherds, like in Steinbeck's novel, are still quietly preaching sermons to themselves and hoping that we do not further fracture our environment, because humans are inseparably part of it. The homeless vagabonds of Steinbeck's novel intentionally detached themselves from the humans that cause the most damage. Steinbeck imagined that human beings could cooperate with nature, but his characters had to be uncomplaining, relatively quiet people without any wealth to speak of, not owning a bit of land.

But has this reconciliation lasted into the twenty first century? The people that created the problems of Zola's novel still existed for Steinbeck, and they continue to exist today: they use all at their disposal, like the shepherds and farmers of Wordsworth. But their arms are longer, and their strength virtually limitless. And while the shepherd may live secluded somewhere like Mack and the boys, the interest in such ideas truly hasn't lost much of its relevance in popular culture. For instance, Cormac McCarthy's 1992 best-selling novel All the Pretty Horses deals with main characters that are fleeing a life of industry. The reasons they flee civilization are varied, but the underlying purposes are the same: they all seem to recognize the apocalyptic trajectory that society has taken against nature, and so they forsake it.

E. B. White, (1899 – 1985) celebrated American naturalist and author of Charlotte's Web, wrote each of his stories with an underlying tension between human beings and nature that could only be reconciled with love and respect, because only then can we avoid destroying our own environment by working it too roughly. And because we ourselves are a product of our environment, destroying it will inevitably lead to our own failure. He writes:

> I am pessimistic about the human race because it is too ingenious for its own good. Our approach to nature is to beat it into submission. We would stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively instead of skeptically and dictatorially. (E. B. White)

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