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Organic Morality: A Poetic Garden Rhetoric Originating in the 18th Century

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Abstract

Many literary critics have researched and conjectured on the 18th century poets' connections to the developing landscape gardens of the time. For example, Francesca Orestano, in "Bust Story: Pope at Stowe, or the Politics and Myths of Landscape Gardening," discusses at length the presence and creation of Pope's development of aesthetics at the Stowe landscape gardens. However, most critics have focused solely on the idea of the aesthetic that gardens create and their relationship to the human experience of nature. Markus Poetzsch, in "From EcoPolitics to Apocalypse: The Contentious Rhetoric of Eighteenth Century Landscape Gardening," describes the heated political world of landscape creation and critique. Other critics have focused on the politicized nature of gardening during the time period. Orestano discusses the changing political viewpoints of 18th century poets based on their writings about landscaping styles, while David C. Streatfield, in his article, "Art and Nature in the English Landscape Garden: Design Theory and Practice, 1700-1818," evaluated Pope's standards and methods of judging and inventing beauty and aestheticism in a garden. For most of these critics, the aesthetic, rather than the productive, nature of the garden has been their focus. Some critics, such as those who have written about the prescriptive, not merely the descriptive, nature of poetry regarding gardens at that time, giving the poem the power of change in the developing structures of what made a "good" landscape garden in the 18th century. In my research, however, I have not yet found a critic that has explored these poets through a lens of environmental morality. This paper will investigate how poets looked at gardens in the 18th century and how they create a way of looking at gardens that has snowballed into our modern day obsession with organic gardening. The paper will then investigate the rhetoric of organic gardening and its connection to the writers in question. It will explore the concept of environmental morality as a moral structure that finds its motivation within the relationship between human and nature. In other words, a moral system that is based on the environmental would look at nature and how humans treat and use nature, otherwise known as gardening, as a method by which the virtue of a person can be discovered. These authors, unlike their predecessors, such as Andrew Marvell who used gardens as a scene or object of description in poetry, used poetry as a way to analyze and moralize gardens and the act of gardening. They create a discourse of garden morality that has morphed over time into the discourse surrounding organic gardening today. This ecocritical analysis of the poets Alexander Pope, Stephen Duck, and William Cowper will expound upon this idea and explore the connection between their works, 18th century landscape gardening, and the development of an organic--

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based garden morality system that has come to the forefront of our society today

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18th century was the first century that witnessed the birth of American poets and from there began a never ending cycle of poetry that is still being celebrated despite the modern age. The 18th century was filled with many ups and downs and one of the biggest change that was seen in the 18th century was the rise of poets and poetesses. Now it isn't being said that poets didn't exist before that, they did. But most of them were famous because they were rich and belonged to a royal family. But in 18th century, this changed, and those who didn't fit the previous set standards came forward with their brilliant poems and surprised the world with their beautiful, captivating poems. English Poetry in 18th Century: 18th Century Poems. 18th century prose The eighteenth century, however, if it was not a great age of poetry, was great in prose, and in other realms of prose than that of theatrical comedy. At its outset the short essay was almost perfected by Steele and Addison in the pages of the Toiler and the Spectator. Pamphleteering was elevated into a fine art by Defoe and Swift. Defoe, in a series of works unmatched in their realism from the Journal of the Plague to Robinson Crusoe, created the English Novel; and Swift made the travels of Gulliver to Lilliput and Brobdingnag almost as convincing as the adventures of Cruso