

# W. H. Hudson: *American Original*

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## I. Hudson and Shakespeare's American Romance

AS A YOUNG man W. H. Hudson found himself one night on "a very curious boat, reported ancient and much damaged; long and narrow in shape, like a Viking's ship, with the passengers' cabins ranged like a row of small wooden cottages on the deck" (*Idle Days* 1). The captain lay sick, near death, in his cabin when the ship shuddered violently, awaking everyone with its grinding noises. Hudson heard sailors crying out, "We are lost!" "Ay, lost forever!" (2). The ship escaped the rocks, however, to be mired in sand not far from the beach. At first light the young naturalist waded ashore to Patagonia:

There it lay full in sight before me — the unmarred desert that wakes strange feelings in us; the ancient habitation of giants, whose footprints seen on the sea-shore amazed Magellan and his men, and won for it the name of Patagonia. There, too, far away in the interior, was the place called Traplanda, and the spirit guarded lake, on whose margins rose the battlements of that mysterious city which many have sought and none have found. (4)

It is typical of Hudson that at once, here, he checks his lyric prose with a prosaic reminder: "It was not, however, the fascination of old legend . . . but the passion of the ornithologist [that] took me" (4). The "curious boat" and "strange feelings," the Vikings, giants, spirit-guarded lake, and mysterious city raise in us questions that can hardly be answered by ornithology, however impassioned. Throughout the chapters that follow, Hudson's opening pages retain their romantic allurements, their promise of a new-world adventure in a land still containing, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, terra incognita. "Here be giants," the Magellan-era maps would have read; and when Hudson wrote, no one had as yet quite proved the fables wrong.

Memory finds an earlier time, closer to Magellan, when another ship is about to break up, with “a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard.” The ship’s master gives orders: “Fall to ’t, yarely, or we run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir” (1.1.3-4.) But the sailors surrender to the sea, echoing Hudson’s counterparts: “All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!” (1.1.56). The scene, of course, is the opening of Shakespeare’s most “American” play, *The Tempest*, a play ostensibly set on the coast of an island in the Mediterranean, though memory seeks to place it far to the west, given its long associations with new-world voyaging. Shakespeare in fact knew of Magellan’s perils in Patagonia, and took the name Setebos in *The Tempest* from a name Magellan heard spoken by “giants” not far from the locale of Hudson’s close escape. When Hudson heard the sailors crying “All is lost!” did he think of himself as Ferdinand, nearing the yellow sands of a new, mysterious world? Did he, remembering Shakespeare’s play, perhaps even invent much of this incident?

In his writings Hudson seldom mentions Shakespeare, and then only briefly — and respectfully, except when he catches the dramatist making a mistake about birds. An exception is chapter 5 of *A Hind in Richmond Park* (1922), which develops a comparison between Shakespeare the self-concealing poet and Chaucer the self-revealing one. It is the kind of insight that would occur only to someone with an intelligent grasp of both poets and leaves little doubt that Hudson would have known a major play like *The Tempest*. The appeal existed, I believe, in certain deeply ingrained characteristics of the author that are customarily associated with US writers, on the whole not surprising since both his parents emigrated from the US to Argentina. One such characteristic invites particular attention: Hudson fashioned himself deliberately, almost obsessively, as an original writer whose fiction sprang wholly from his own imagination, displaying outwardly a typically US preference for the empirical over “literature.”

Similarities between *The Tempest* and Hudson’s best-known work, *Green Mansions* (1904), begin at the beginning. An overthrow of the government occurs in both Milan and in Caracas. In both plots a young man, isolated in a wilderness far from

home, discovers a mysterious, seemingly prelapsarian virgin living with a fatherly protector in apparently supernatural circumstances. Rima's very name rearranges the first part of Miranda's. The scene in chapter 2, when Abel first hears Rima's voice, contains several hints of Shakespeare's play, including a repetition of the "tempest": "I began to hear a confused noise as of a coming tempest of wind"; "After that tempest of motion and confused noise the silence of the forest seemed very profound" (38). Hearing a mysterious voice, "a voice purified and brightened to something almost angelic" (39), Abel resembles Ferdinand listening to the invisible Ariel's song after the shipwreck. Hudson in effect fused Miranda and Ariel into Rima. She has Ariel's bird-like qualities and his Pan-like power over nature, as well as Miranda's innocence and beauty. In chapter 3, Abel experiences the terrifying, Pan-Ariel Rima when he walks more boldly into the enchanted place. "Imaginary terrors began to assail me," he exclaims. "It was distressing to have such fancies in this wild, solitary spot — hateful to feel their power over me when I knew that they were nothing but fancies and creations of the savage mind" (50-51). Rima takes on a dangerous aspect when the coral snake at her foot strikes Abel, who falls into a panic as do the victims of Prospero's magic in *The Tempest*.

Caliban, too, finds a counterpart among the neighboring Indians, especially Kua-kó. In both drama and novel the wild men seek to rape or kill the virgin beauty; in both they suffer for their attacks. Nuflo calls the Indians "children of the devil" (96), a phrase that recalls Caliban's demonic origins as the offspring of a witch and perhaps a devil. In their mistrust of the "savage" natives, Abel and Rima resemble Prospero and Miranda — not to mention Shakespeare's actual countrymen who colonized America. If anything, Hudson's Indians constitute a more hostile presence than Shakespeare's monster. They have Caliban's superstition and ignorance and his peculiar blend of vengefulness with childlike naivete, but their schemes succeed. Abel brings magic with him — the silver tinder box, the revolver that Kua-kó so desires. In contrast to the comic eschatological ending of *The Tempest*, this tragedy carries out Caliban's desired revolt, steering Abel, Rima, Nuflo, and the Indians toward an apocalyptic end.

Ferdinand and Miranda, like Abel and Rima, participate reciprocally in the plot. Both texts recount a discovery of identity in the other. Two sons have lost a father; two daughters a mother. The two heroines' dead mothers represent a lost, prelapsarian life, a break in the cycle of life, that only their re-entry into nature can repair. The daughters must find themselves while, in psychological terms, the males Abel and Ferdinand enter nature to find the feminine part of themselves. In the new birth of adolescence, Rima and Miranda seek for the first time to know their origins. If Miranda finds a "brave new world," so does Rima on hearing Abel's geography lecture: "Come, let us go together — we two and grandfather, and see all the world; all the mountains and forests, and know all the people" (155).

As one of the great utopian works of the Renaissance, *The Tempest* also invites comparison with Hudson's earlier novel, *A Crystal Age* (1887). In a distant future time, society is organized in great halls governed by a single father and mother. The outsider Smith meets Yoletta, who like Miranda and Rima knows nothing of male passion. Smith alienates both her parents, especially with his accounts of civilized Europe, which they dismiss as fantasies. Their own sacred book describes how people of that world "in their madness . . . hoped by knowledge to gain absolute dominion over nature, thereby taking from the Father of the world his prerogatives" (60). In *The Tempest*, Prospero's magic has gained him dominion over nature; Hudson's utopia turns the art-nature relationship around, as "men of humble mind" (61) achieve perfection by submitting their arts wholly to nature. In a similar ironic inversion, while Ariel is liberated from a tree at the start of Prospero's conquest of nature, the anti-natural Smith is preserved in a tree, in apparent suspended animation, until Yoletta's people discover him at the beginning of the novel.

Among other sources proposed for *Green Mansions*, a leading contender, argued in 1926 by Henry Salt, is a popular Canadian novel that Hudson read, *Heart of the Ancient Woods*, by Charles G. D. Roberts, whose Rima-like heroine is a girl named Miranda.<sup>1</sup> Yet, except for its natural setting, the novel's similarities to *Green Mansions* are unconvincing. Miranda's mother, to escape a mean

human community, comes to the remote Canadian woods where her daughter soon becomes attached to a bear named Kroof. By age seventeen, Miranda, a perfect natural beauty, is protecting the animals from hunters, even from her friend Dave who lives in the only other cabin of the region. This Miranda does share Rima's power over animals, not to mention an aura of mystery, of "something unreal and haunting in the inexplicable clarity of her gazes" (147). Both girls are militant vegetarians. Roberts's character has not lost touch with her origins, however, as have Shakespeare's and Hudson's heroines. There are no parallels with other characters in *The Tempest*; no savage Caliban lurks about. Roberts himself had obviously been thinking of *The Tempest* when he named his character, so why no one has ever thought of Rima in connection with the more famous Miranda is anyone's guess. I suggest that Hudson's pose as the unbookish man of nature, unlikely to mine "great literature," has succeeded completely. If a rough old naturalist like Hudson had a source, it must have been from a "popular" author whom a supposedly non-literary man would read, someone like Charles Roberts.

## II. Hudson's American Originals

Other presences besides Shakespeare inhabit *Green Mansions*, which itself takes to the well-traveled pathways of narrative romance, building on the theme of young lovers discovering themselves in nature. From ancient texts like the Genesis story and Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* (ca. 200 AD) — which Gesner has studied as a source of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* — Bernardin de St. Pierre crafted the immensely popular Rousseauist tale set on Mauritius, *Paul et Virginie* (1788), a story read, staged, and painted throughout most of the nineteenth century. *Green Mansions* shares the cautious diffidence toward erotic passion so evident in Shakespeare's play and in Bernardin de St. Pierre's young lovers. But it is likely that Hudson's American parentage influenced his choice of books during a youth much given, in the absence of formal schooling, to solitary walks and reading. At least one scholar has made a case for Hudson's origins as a nature writer in Emerson and Thoreau.<sup>2</sup> In *Idle Days in Patagonia*, Hudson also digresses at length on Melville's thoughts about

whiteness in *Moby Dick* — this well before the 1920s “rediscovery” of that novel and its author. Remembering that he first learned of Melville from Hudson, his friend Morley Roberts wrote:

Often Hudson and I wondered how it was that Americans still looked forward to some great American book when all they had to do was cast their eyes backward and find it. Some day they will turn upon their path and see that in the cloud and mist which covered their passage they have missed one of their two great monuments of literature. . . . It is said to be a book of the whale. It is also a book of the ship and of the sea and of man, and Hudson knew it and learnt from it and spread its name. (131)

Abel's questing spirit and final revenge-mania carry on Melvillean themes; his primitivist romance with a strange paradisaical maiden and his ambivalence about life among the indigenous people recall the experiences of Melville's sailor protagonist in *Typee*. David Miller draws persuasive comparisons between Hudson and Melville as mythopoeic writers of symbolically resonant fiction, and as writers captivated by the US obsession with (in Harry Levin's terms) “the powers of blackness” (89-92, 190).

But more than any of his other parents' countrymen Nathaniel Hawthorne finds a way into Hudson's imagination, evidenced in *Green Mansions's* atmosphere of forest mystery, so evocative of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), or “Roger Malvin's Burial” (1831). Satanism, woods, and witchcraft figure in the *El Ombu* (1902) story, “Pelino Viera's Confession,” in ways that echo “Young Goodman Brown.” Hudson also shows considerable knowledge of Hawthorne in his essay “Serpents in Literature.” In *Idle Days in Patagonia* he reveals that he has been reading a biography of Hawthorne, whose habitual mingling of reality and romance strongly resembles the oscillating transcendentalism of *Green Mansions*. Abel's role as initiate into the dark experience of human nature follows an established Hawthorne scenario, if not one characteristic of most major texts of earlier American fiction. R. W. B. Lewis has observed “the proposition, implicit in much American writing from Poe to Cooper to Anderson and Hemingway, that the valid rite of initiation in the new world is not an initiation *into* society, but, given the character of the society, an initiation *away from it*” (115).

Since a major theme of *A Crystal Age* was the need to contain "sexual rage" (Garnett 174-75), the hero's desire for Rima in *Green Mansions* must be received with the same suspicion we usually bring to the lover in Hawthorne's "Rappacini's Daughter." When Abel almost dies from the snake bite as he is about to touch Rima, we may hear echoes of this American love story about a mysterious, poisonous, Edenic virgin. Like Hawthorne, too, Hudson ruminates over the old Anglo-American Puritan ideas of the soul's terrible isolation, when at the end Abel comes to believe that "outside of the soul there is no forgiveness in heaven or earth for sin" (323). Abel links Rima with the tempting serpent of Genesis when he describes his "astonishment and admiration at the brilliant being as she advanced with swift, easy, undulating motion towards me" (79). The innocent girl activates a moral poison that Abel has long carried — that continues to work in him after he survives the literal venom. To punish Rima for her seeming coyness, Abel returns to Runi's village; but almost at once "my passion, which I had now ceased to struggle against, . . . overcame me, and I was ready to return" (144-45). In doing so he becomes lost in a sudden storm, another tempest, while searching for her. The experience projects the inner desire that drives him:

Groping blindly along I became entangled in a dense undergrowth, and after struggling and stumbling along for some distance in vain endeavours to get through it, I came to a stand at last in sheer despair. All sense of direction was now lost: I was entombed in thick blackness — blackness of night and cloud and rain and of dripping foliage and network of branches bound with bushropes and creepers in a wild tangle. (146-47)

Hudson's forest merges with the same pattern of symbolism that Hawthorne used in a story like "Roger Malvin's Burial" — spiritual confusion mirrored in the darkness and disorientation of the forest. In the darkness Rima finds Abel, but escapes when he tries to embrace her. Then,

[s]tooping and putting my arm around her body, I drew her up and held her against my breast, and felt her heart throbbing wildly. With many endearing words I begged her to speak to me; but her only reply was, "Come — come," as she slipped again out of my arms, and holding my hand in hers, guided me through the bushes. (149)

Steering him back to Nuflo's lodge, she leaves him in one of her many vanishing acts. It is undoubtedly as a spirit of chastity, the dangerous virgin figured in the coral snake, that she warns Abel some days later, "Listen! You must not look into my eyes, you must not touch me with your hands" (187). Here and elsewhere in the novel Rima communicates to the reader an uncleanness about Abel's love, something from an order of physicality that she transcends. Only later, undergoing her transformation in the cave at Riolama from a paradisaical to a mortal young woman, does she show any positive signs of reciprocal passion. So constructed, as a character she brings to mind the troubling ambiguity of such Hawthorne heroines as Zenobia in *Blithedale Romance* (1852) adrift between spiritual symbol and real woman.

Rima as symbol, however, echoes yet another American story that Hudson probably knew, Edgar Allan Poe's "Eleonora" (1842). Hudson admired Poe's work as much as Hawthorne's,<sup>3</sup> and all three writers share a strain of the "antipatriarchal romance" that Emily Miller Budick marks as peculiarly American (14).<sup>4</sup> Other texts also converge here. Several readers have seen *Paul et Virginie* at the root of Poe's brief lyrical tale, set "beneath a tropical sun, in the Valley of the Many-colored Grass" (Poe, "Eleonora" 639).<sup>5</sup> Although the narrator and Eleonora grow up together, from the time they discover "Eros" (640) they follow a path similar to Abel's and Rima's. With love, Eleonora "had been made perfect in loveliness only to die" (642), and her death brings on a fall from Eden, a change that destroys the valley's beauty. Like Abel, the narrator flees from the lost paradise, becoming confused, even embittered, and haunted by Eleonora's ghost. Yet he finally manages, as Abel does not, to find peace with a new love, which the voice of the dead girl blesses "for reasons which shall be made known to thee in heaven" (645).

### III. Being Original

Hudson's disclaimers that he was not a "literary man" would seem to cast doubt on any knowing literary appropriations by this plain-speaking, largely self-educated immigrant from Argentina. David Miller quotes Hudson via his friend Ford Madox Ford: "I'm not one of your damned writers: I'm a naturalist from La Plata" (10). Morley Roberts quotes from a letter stating, "I am



no judge of fiction, as it is not in my line" (137) and mentions that Hudson often expressed such disclaimers.<sup>6</sup> Yet this mask of unlettered innocence does not square with the facts of his life. When *Green Mansions* appeared in 1904, Hudson already belonged to a circle of friends that included George and Algernon Gissing, Roberts, R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Edward Thomas, and the leading editor and critic Edward Garnett. Of his friend Thomas, he wrote with typical self-effacement: "He was an Oxford graduate, and a literary man by profession; I, unschooled and unclassed, born and bred in a semi-barbarous district among the horsemen of the pampas" (*Dead Man's Plack* 316). Roberts, who enjoyed the longest of Hudson's literary friendships, recalls "his lively passion for many of the moderns," so consuming, in fact, that "His knowledge of current literature, good and bad, was almost unequalled" (112, 166). If he spent little time with the literature of the ancient world, he was surprisingly well read in that of earlier England. He knew not only Chaucer and Shakespeare but "a thousand negligible writers of the eighteenth century and picked up their stray grains with avidity" (Roberts 167). Just hours before his death, on 18 August 1922, he was urging Roberts to read a Yeats item in the latest *London Mercury* (301). One of his admirers by this time, Joseph Conrad, wrote Graham to express his "real affection for that unique personality" with its "somewhat mysterious fascination" (Conrad 194). Hudson's letters to Edward Garnett disclose his love of Russian fiction and Traherne's "The Salutation," along with his aversion to D. H. Lawrence and Amy Lowell and to the utopias of Morris and Bellamy, authors whom he read in writing *A Crystal Age*.

By all accounts, then, Hudson was as much a "literary man" as any of his fellow writers. Why did he seek to downplay his interests? As a naturalist in an age of science, perhaps he wanted to preserve his reputation from the taint of literature. Yet even as a scientist he went his own way, stubbornly resisting, for example, some of the accepted ideas of Darwin. I propose that he publicly distanced himself from literary sources and models, in which he had immersed himself, out of a very private but discernible aesthetic of originality that has ties with, if not origins in, his American (both South and North) roots. As romance,

*Green Mansions* belongs to a genre always rooted less in experience than, quite simply, in other romances. Along with most of Hudson's other fiction, being a romance it is the kind of story that can *only* be written by a "literary" person. The novel's very setting, in a region of South America that Hudson never visited, distances his text from his experience. Roberts notes that Hudson never entered any woodlands bigger than those of England (118). Discussing the novel recently, a Panamanian student observed that Abel never would have lain down on the jungle floor as he does early on, to contemplate the green mansions; in no time he would have been covered by insects.

Both Hudson's letters and his friends portray a man who took great care in his self-presentation, and whose self-perception largely shaped his sense of his art. Conrad leaves a clue with the phrase about Hudson's "somewhat mysterious fascination"; Roberts expands on this in recalling that "Hudson used at one time to go to some literary gatherings and there met many notable men, amiable and able people, and he sat among them while they talked and, as I know, understood him little or not at all" (109). He seems aloof, the outsider, a role perhaps exaggerated by his reticence and his tall, lanky appearance. When he speaks of himself in relation to Edward Thomas as "unclassed," he discloses the pride beneath the humility. He is an original. And on this foundation he builds his literary self: "not a literary man."

This desire to be an original person corresponds with the high value Hudson placed on originality in his writing. He seems to have gone out of his way to avoid any appearance of imitating in his fiction. Yet the dependence of any artist upon his predecessors is an accepted premise of aesthetics, a subject extensively discussed in studies by Joel Weinsheimer and Thomas McFarland (see also D'haen). Weinsheimer argues a theory of imitation proposing that every literary text is both mediated and, by the very fact that it is "literary," an imitation. We cannot "write about" without "writing through." McFarland, as a historian of this subject, centres on the growing eighteenth-century realization of the "originality paradox": that in Pope's words about "the Ancients" (for Hudson, read "collective predecessors"), "to copy nature is to copy them."<sup>7</sup> Both scholars are exploring the terri-

tory of Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*, though in less Freudian terms; like Bloom they document authors' troubled experiences with predecessors, issuing in a desire to throw off or conceal parental authority. Hudson communicates his own, not atypical, craftsmanly secretiveness in offhand remarks like that on his last book, *A Hind in Richmond Park*: "My plan is to seem to have no plan" (Roberts 69). In a revealing comment on his reluctance to probe too deeply into the work of other writers, he explains, "The keener the admiration the more danger to originality which is after all the main thing" (Garnett 177).

Not novelty, then, which is as unachievable in literature as in any social act, but concealment safeguards Hudson's aesthetic of originality. As an immigrant from an alien culture (he sometimes called himself "an old gaucho"), Hudson naturally developed habits of concealment. Scientifically, socially, and artistically self-schooled, he also endured the autodidact's classic double bind of pride and self-doubt. One result is a secretiveness about resources. Whatever these may have been, though, Hudson knew literature. He spoke and wrote about it privately; he thought of his fiction in terms of genre; he studied his predecessors as critically as any Renaissance practitioners of *imitatio*. From his neglected masterpiece of autobiography, *Far Away and Long Ago* (1918), we know that during his early life in Argentina he educated himself in nature but also in books. The testimony of Morley Roberts and others who knew him after his arrival in England at age thirty-two confirms the picture of an eager reader, especially since he "spent his time with books when poverty shut out the country and kept him in London" (Roberts 37). By the time of *Green Mansions*, he had acquired the literary knowledge to sculpt a lost-paradise romance enriched from the main currents of that tradition, in particular from *The Tempest* and the American romances that he knew so well.

In this very pretense of originality, is there not something of Lewis's "American Adam," an echo of Pound's agenda to "make it new?" The "American myth saw life and history as just beginning," writes Lewis, regarding the attempt to forge a new national personality "emancipated from history" (5). Following Pound's advice to "keep your eye on the object more, and be

less licherary," Hemingway saw his relation to predecessors not as an apprenticeship but as a competitive role "in which authors battled over who could most approximate reality's truth" (Knight 136-37). If Emerson's desire for "an original relationship with the universe" is quintessentially (US) American, then "*American* is synonymous with *beginner*, and a beginner is one who, if he is not to be condemned to repeat the past, is bound to reinterpret it and thus create his own time" (Bauerline 1, 5). Hudson's new worlds of *Green Mansions* and *A Crystal Age* represent this new time in the Genesis-like encounter and fall parallel to the time evoked with elegiac nostalgia in his memoir of childhood, *Far Away and Long Ago* — at last reappearing in print, from Lyons Press. Writing this book in England, Hudson knew that the pampas had changed immeasurably for the worse. He came to believe that his life had ended when he left that now-vanished land. A favourite boyhood haunt, once "alive with spoonbills, black-necked swans, glossy ibises in clouds, and great blue ibises, is now possessed by aliens, who destroy all bird-life and grow corn on the land for the markets of Europe" (197).

Elegiac in other respects is the discourse in *Green Mansions* of Abel's urn, "ornamented with flower and leaf and thorn, and winding through it all the figure of a serpent" (Prologue). The inscription reads, "Sin vos y sin dios, y mi" — without you and without God, and me, or as the living Abel says, "I, no longer I, in a universe where *she* was not, and God was not" (304). The serpent that Hudson studied in Hawthorne (Abel's is truly a "bosom serpent") winds its way trailing the passion, deceit, death, and wisdom that Abel brings to Rima's forest. Identifiable with Hawthorne, too, is Abel's final realization that "outside the soul there is no forgiveness in heaven or earth for sin" (323). In both Hawthorne and Hudson the ghost of dead faith and innocence cannot be laid.

Hudson read widely but not openly, occasionally displaying critical insight shrewd enough to show that he knew more than he let on. Certain classic American Writers — Hawthorne, Melville, Poe — formed a major part of this literary knowledge; but they are not the only "American" element in his makeup, which also includes a reluctance to acknowledge any literary

parents at all. Finally, since *The Tempest*, America has been associated with the kind of paradisaal themes that more darkly invest *Green Mansions*. Hudson's fellow Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges has pointed out additionally the "nearly paradisiac" tone of *The Purple Land* (1885), though, unlike Rima's story, this earlier novel "is one of the very few happy books in the world" (152). Paradise, however, must compete with a typically *North American*, Protestant concern with humanity's post-paradisaal condition; this opposition creates the principal tension in W. H. Hudson's dark romance.

## NOTES

- 1 See Salt; and Charles Roberts. We lack the earlier MS version of *Green Mansions* called "Mr. Abel," which T. Fisher Unwin rejected following Edward Garnett's recommendation. Garnett left Unwin in 1899, and Roberts's novel did not appear till 1900. See Jefferson 78.
- 2 Amy Rossner observes, "Hudson was not content to write *about* Nature; he wished to *be* Nature" (6).
- 3 Morley Roberts (193) remembers a discussion of Poe that ended with Hudson's reciting "Annabel Lee" (1849) from memory.
- 4 For comments linking "Eleonora" to Hawthorne, see Budick 69.
- 5 For comments on this story and *Paul et Virginie*, see Poe 636 n.
- 6 Cf. Garnett, "But I'm no literary man and these are questions for you, not for me" (177).
- 7 Joachim von der Thüsen, "The Shaking Walls of Convention," echoes McFarland in describing the late 1700s as a crisis point, after which "The old poetics of emulation had given way to a tolerant democracy of genres and to the poetics of originality" (D'haen 123).

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