

RECONSTRUCTING THE CULTURE OF HORTICULTURE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC

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I would like to present two narratives based on two projects that are loosely interrelated, yet worlds apart. The first project, Charles Hamilton's landscape garden of 1738-1773—Painshill Park in Surrey, England—will be familiar to those who know my book *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden*.¹ At Painshill and in my current research, the horticultural reconstruction of eighteenth-century picturesque continues to evolve as an elusive revisionist exercise. The second project, Chiefswood near Brantford, Ontario, has some local familiarity. The reconstruction of planting at Chiefswood—and its associations with poet E Pauline Johnson—illustrates the difficulty of applying the term “picturesque” to a thoroughly hybrid landscape; it also implies a revisionist approach to landscape conservation.² If Painshill was—especially in its planting design—an offshoot of Anglo-American colonial endeavor, Chiefswood appears—through its Palladian villa and nut-bearing groves—a study in harmonizing Indian and Anglo-American identities. Both projects appear threatened by degradation: primarily environmental degradation in the case of Painshill; but cultural as well as environmental degradation in the case of Chiefswood.

I came to Painshill by chance in the autumn of 1983, looking for a thesis subject. The efforts of the independent Painshill Park Trust to rescue Charles Hamilton's derelict landscape offered a perfect laboratory. Here I could test out my paper reconstruction of decorative picturesque plantings: the shrubberies and flower clumps of the pleasure ground. Fifteen years later the thesis became a book, just as Painshill was awarded a “Europa Nostra” medal.³ The Gothic Temple and the Grotto were restored. The Turkish Tent was reconstructed. And, as befits any good fabricated ruin, the Ruined Abbey was spruced up alongside a newly replanted vineyard. Step by step each folly or eye-catcher was given its appropriate floral setting. For example, as a backdrop to the

¹For a discussion of Painshill, and relevant bibliographical material, see Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds, 1720-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 3-23. The associational role of planting at Painshill is discussed in this introduction.

²This project is discussed in my forthcoming article “Landscape Conservation at Chiefswood National Historic Site,” *Environments* (University of Waterloo's Heritage Resources Centre).

³ See “Forgotten gardens wins top European award,” in *The Guardian*, 28 January 1999.

remodeled copy of Giambologna's "Rape of a Sabine Woman," I planted an Italianate evergreen amphitheatre. Here American exotics like *Magnolia grandiflora* took their place alongside Italian cypress and Swedish juniper. The Ruined Abbey got its shrubbery. And, while waiting for the reconstruction of the Temple of Bacchus, I encouraged the planting of riotous flower clumps.

It is far from perfect. The canvas of the tent is decayed and awaits repair; other projects clamour for funding; and the new visitor centre still awaits the visitor numbers to make the project economically viable. But in these images at least the elusive ideal is captured for posterity. All such colour and intricacy helps revise our received view of the landscape garden as a vast picture of unrelieved green.

The thesis of the book and the principle of planting at Painshill are disarmingly simple. They follow from the revisionist premise: that flowers and flowering shrubs were part of the English landscape garden. All decorative picturesque planting conforms to an Edenic ideal: a theatre of plants. "Theatre" can be understood here in two senses: first, as a graduated arrangement, like seats in an amphi-theatre; second, as a complete collection or compendium of plants. Just as the first botanic gardens represented an effort to reassemble the Garden of Eden from plants that were supposedly scattered after the Fall,⁴ so too the landscape garden could be an Edenic collecting-ground. Plants were assembled from the four continents: Europe, Asia, America, and even Africa provided a hothouse where available. The "pleasure ground" close to the house was the safest place to display those collections within the extensive landscape park. It was protected from livestock by the ha-ha or sunk fence, and it was furnished with glasshouses, hothouses, and all the technological aids needed to make refined horticulture possible. Within the pleasure ground, a new feature known as the "shrubbery" proved the ideal "theatrical" display-case for exotic flowers, flowering shrubs, and trees. In that graduated theatre or shrubbery, American plants featured prominently: magnolias, kalmias, pines, and even poison ivy. Colonial endeavour offered new opportunities for collectors to add woodland and swamp plants from Pennsylvania and the Carolinas to the existing repertoire of European and Asian plantings. For, just as in the seventeenth century the influx of bulbs from Turkey and Asia Minor led to the tulipomania, so in the eighteenth century something of a "shrubomania" developed around American magnolias and pines. To us

⁴ The background to this belief is elegantly presented in John Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Re-Creation of Paradise* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

in Canada, the white pine and the silver maple are natives of the forest; but to Charles Hamilton they were rare and highly prized exotics.

Two terms or motifs are thus all you need to understand my book: (1) “theatrical” graduation; and (2) American “shrubomania.” What follows here are somewhat speculative trajectories, lines of recent research that flow out from the book’s central thesis. For example, take Johann Heinrich Müntz’s painting *Strawberry Hill from the South*, dated ca 1755-59. It shows Horace Walpole’s “theatrical” shrubbery to the immediate right of the Gothic villa. It is graduated from roses at the front to the American false acacia at the rear. He told his friends that it had to be *riant* or gay in contrast to the “gloomth” of his house, and we can picture the shrubbery in his words: “A violent shower in the morning laid the dust, brightened the green, refreshed the roses, pinks, orange-flowers and the blossoms with which the acacias are covered.”⁵

Every gardener knows, however, that planting is prone to cycles of growth and decay; even a “theatrical” shrubbery changes over time. Once you appreciate this, the disarmingly simple motif of the “theatre” turns into a complex drama. I had come to the conclusion that what was depicted by two artists some fifteen to thirty years after Müntz’s depiction—a lattice fence with orange-tree tubs and flowers—reflected Walpole’s intervention to mend the threadbare fabric of an over-mature shrubbery. This was a logical assumption, since we had encountered the same phenomenon in our laboratory at Painshill: gaps, leggy shrubs, and a compaction that appear as any theatrical shrubbery matures. But then I found reason to question my assumption. I was re-reading Walpole’s *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*,⁶ first printed in 1771.⁷ To my surprise he praised—in the midst of glorifying English gardens—the *treillage* and “transpicuous” arbors of Paris; and when he mentioned also the trellis-work and espaliers depicted in a second volume of prints of Herculanum, I investigated further. It turns out that he was referring to

⁵ Quoted in Laird, *The Flowering*, 1999), 164.

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Horace Walpole. *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (London, 1771).

⁷ The arguments are presented in my forthcoming essay “From Hyssop to Cedar of Lebanon: The Groves and Shrubberies of St John’s,” the First Robert Person Lecture, St John’s College, Oxford. The essay also provides a good summary of the shrubbery’s religious or classical associations.

the second volume of *Le Pitture antiche d'Ercolano* of 1760,⁸ which he acquired in 1767. The imagery of Herculaneum was surely uppermost in his mind in the early 1770s when, for cultural as well as horticultural reasons, he remodelled his shrubbery. All this makes us aware of the dangers of facile deduction. In other words, reading the shrubbery as a dynamic as well as Edenic form must be combined with disentangling cultural associations.

The dynamic of shrubbery raises here a central concern: edge treatments. Line and rhythm are crucial in the picturesque, because, in its early manifestation at least, it was still beholden to baroque principles. There are, of course, ways of asserting line or edge that are less contrived than Walpole's latticework. For example, we have used box at three-foot intervals to provide an informal equivalent to the clipped hedge that was disappearing from shrubbery around 1750. Evergreens are easier to manage than deciduous plantations, because line and rhythm can be sustained throughout the year. But Fiona Cowell at Hatfield Priory has demonstrated, through recon-structing the practice of "Capability" Brown's main rival, Richard Woods, how flowers can create line and rhythm. To disguise our threadbare fabric at Painshill, the gardener Malcolm Goodwin has introduced a rather lovely flower clump; and next season we will mend the skirt of the shrubbery with a simple palette of leafy perennials. There was, of course, always the resort to "plunging"—the artifice of placing greenhouse plants directly in their pots to fill gaps. However, that requires labour-intensive practices, possible in the eighteenth century when wages were at subsistence level, but less easy today when the gardening staff is reduced to the minimum to save costs.

So much then for planting dynamics and growth. Essentially this organic dimension animates the drama of the "theatrical" shrubbery generated by American "shrubomania." Yet, to understand the evolution of the shrubbery, we need to appreciate that aesthetics also changed over the period loosely known as "the picturesque," the century from 1730 to 1830. Thus, what began life as a stiff linear graduation of flowers, shrubs, and trees became a subtle composition of curves and ellipses. Specimen shrubs and trees stood in counterpoint to continuous plantations. All the while, however, edge and rhythm remained. That continuity of line and alternation, inherited from the baroque style, gradually matured into something that we would now clearly recognize as picturesque.

In other words, only by the 1820s, after almost a century of experimentation, did line give way to broken form, while regular, alternating

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Ottavio Antonio Bayardi and Pasquale Carcani, eds, *Le pitture antiche d'Ercolano*, 5 vols (Naples: Regia Stamperia, 1757-79).

rhythm was replaced by irregular massing. Our work on John Nash's shrubberies in St James's Park, London, suggests the difference. Very recently, I have attempted a reconstruction on paper of planting features in the pleasure ground of Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau in Germany. Pückler-Muskau was a self-confessed "parkomaniac" who modelled his estate on the English landscape garden. His shrubberies were based on what he had seen of the Nash method in St James's Park, and his hortensia baskets were inspired by the rose baskets that Humphry Repton favoured for the Brighton Pavilion. On the other hand, some features of his flower-gardening were shifting in the direction of "carpet-bedding," gardenesque ornamentation, and all that we associate with the Victorian garden. This was the end of the line for the picturesque pleasure ground.

It would be misleading to infer here that picturesque flower-gardening lacked the geometry of Pückler's garden; it was simply a different geometry. Flowers, just as much as flowering shrubs, always played a role in the eighteenth-century English pleasure ground. Once again, of course, the motif was the "theatrical" flower clump. Isaac Ware described them as resembling "flower-pots, or large nose-gays rising out of the ground in their happy form."⁹ We have been able to reconstruct circular and elliptical beds at Painshill from unusually rich documentation of the summer palette at three related sites: Nuneham, Audley End, and Hartwell. Yet a perplexing aspect to the three prototypes remains the spring planting palette. There are a smattering of spring flowers itemized in the Hartwell plans of 1799, but not enough to make sense of the overall composition.

I asked the gardeners at Painshill to try an experiment: to plant the beds with a mixture of bulbs such as species tulips, fritillarias, and the like. It proved that, in contrast to the wonderful effects of the spring flora within a walled baroque garden, spring plantings in the leafless naturalistic setting of a picturesque flower garden fail. You cannot create sufficient volume or enough graduation. Compare it to the early summer effect, which works. The questions are complex. Did the spring planting matter less because families were only resident in the country house in summer? Or was "enamelling" an alternative way to create spring interest if the family remained in residence year round? This term "enamelling" refers to a practice of growing flowers in grass, derived from meadows that were once full of poppies and corn flowers.¹⁰ We are all familiar with

⁹ Quoted in Laird, *The Flowering*, 185.

¹⁰This is discussed in an article by Jan Woudstra and James Hitchmough, "The Enamelled Mead: History and Practice of Exotic Perennials Grown in

the “millefleur” tapestries, but increasing evidence is coming to light of a continuous tradition of meadow gardening from the middle ages until the present day. At Hestercombe in Somerset, we will be experimenting with various effects achieved in spring through planting primroses, violets, and hepaticas in turf.

Such issues of seasonality lead inevitably to another complex aspect of horticultural reconstruction: weather and climate patterns, now and then. I have witnessed three near-hurricanes in fifteenth years of gardening at Painshill; and I have seen what extreme drought can do to a summer flora by mid-August. This led me to investigate for an ICOMOS conference in Bamberg the following question: how did gardeners cope with extreme weather patterns, especially given the challenges of dealing with new American exotics and the limitations of eighteenth-century technology?¹¹ This is a speculative topic, because you would require sophisticated computer modelling to reconstruct the patterns of the 1730s or 1760s from statistical and anecdotal evidence. Let us say merely that some generally favourable years in the late 1720s and 1730s—a set of seasons that followed the waning “Little Ice Age”¹²—might have been conducive to experimentation with the new American shrubs: *Magnolia grandiflora* or *Callicarpa americana*. And that the above-average wet, warm summers of the mid-century stand in contrast to a run of extremely dry and hot summers in the mid-1990s at Painshill. Whatever we make of “global warming” today, the frequent incidence of extremes—storms, floods, droughts—is inescapable as climate change affects planting reconstruction and conservation.

As I have argued elsewhere, I see environmental degradation as the greatest threat to landscape conservation in general, and to horticultural

Grassy Sward,” *Landscape Research*, 25 no 1 (2000), 29-47.

¹¹ Laird, “Climate, Weather and Planting Design in English Formal Gardens of the Early 18th Century,” in *Die Gartenkunst des Barock*, ed Florian Fiedler and Michael Petzt, vol XXVIII, ICOMOS, Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees (Munich: ICOMOS), 15-19.

¹² For discussion of this term, see H H Lamb, *Climate, History and the Modern World*, 2d ed (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), especially 244-48, where he discusses the “improving tendency of the climate” after the Little Ice Age of the previous century. In “Sayes Court Garden Revisited,” a paper I presented at the John Evelyn conference at the British Library, 15-17 September, 2001, I discussed the impact of the end of the Little Ice Age on English gardening from the Restoration to the period of William and Mary.

heritage in particular.¹³ Transgenics could even prove part of this package, but I shall pass over this point to look at a positive role for genetics. As an analytical tool they offer exciting new possibilities in tracing plant genealogy. I have become increasingly concerned at Painshill with the question of plant provenance. In conjunction with the Smithsonian and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia I have been exploring the idea of using the latest profiling techniques to look at eighteenth-century *Phlox*. Why *Phlox*? Because they are in the Hartwell plans of 1799, indeed in many other eighteenth-century plant lists. However, precisely which *Phlox* species, remains unclear. From my research in herbaria in Oxford and London I know much about when and how a dozen species of *Phlox* were introduced into cultivation, first by Mark Catesby, later by John Bartram and others. Lord Petre's herbarium at the Sutro Library in San Francisco is especially useful because it shows us Bartram's collecting range and methods. But what I still want to know from the scientists is where to find a species or old variety today that corresponds—as far as possible in genetic terms—to the stem that Bartram picked, or to the plant Philip Miller cultivated, or to the cultivar that Sir James Edward Smith described at the time Lady Elizabeth Lee was planting her Hartwell beds.

So my research began fifteen years ago with two key elements: “theatrical” shrubberies and American “shrubomania.” It has progressed in various new directions: horticultural dynamics; line, edge, and rhythms; “enamelling” and seasonality; weather and climate; and, finally, plant genealogy. All these points come together in my most recent research.¹⁴ I am interested in how, from 1690 to 1740, city life helped generate preconditions for the flowering of the landscape garden; Mark Catesby's role in the acclimatization and commodification of American plants; William Sherard's circles of botanical patronage and horticultural production in the coffee houses of London; and, finally, the links between book-subscription and nursery-promotion in the planting of the Prince and Princess of Wales's Carlton House garden off the Mall. It turns out there may be issues of gender in floriculture alongside the Anglo-American

¹³ Laird, “Enlarging the Frame: Der Schutz von historischen Gärten aus angloamerikanischer Sicht,” in *Historische Gärten Schutz und Pflege als Rechtsfrage*, ed Gerte Reichelt, vol 5, Schriftenreihe des Ludwig Boltzmann Institutes für Europarecht (Vienna: Manz, 2000), 49-58.

¹⁴ See Laird, “The Culture of Horticulture: Class, Consumption, and Gender in the English Landscape Garden,” in *Bourgeois and Aristocratic Encounters in the Garden*, ed Michel Conan (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 221-54.

colonial enterprise of Mark Catesby that brought the American tulip tree and catalpa to Carlton House.

In comparison to the subscription list for Catesby's *Natural History*,¹⁵ Robert Furber's *Twelve Months of Flowers*¹⁶ reveals a high percentage of women subscribers. Elizabeth Hyde has pointed to the role of English women in floriculture that is not reflected in French circles in the time of Louis XIV: from the Duchess of Beaufort to the Princess of Wales.¹⁷

As we move forward to the late nineteenth century and the world of Mohawk "Princess" Pauline Johnson, it would be tendentious to overstate the linkage between my two narratives. True, the Johnson family connects, at one time, with the Prince of Wales; true also, that Chief Johnson's native hickories are linked to Painshill, where they were grown as exotics. If there is a cor-respondence, however, it lies in the nature of the contrasting methodologies of reconstruction and the respective threats to those reconstructions. At Painshill we have been concerned to revise our preconceived notions of the landscape garden: step by step, from general principles of colour and form, to environmental context, to the most precise genetic profiling. At Chiefswood, we are obliged to revise this object-based approach to conservation in favour of a largely associational method. Neither process, meanwhile, can es-cape the impinging realities of degradation.

Chiefswood National Historic Site is situated on the Six Nations to the south of Brantford, Ontario. The house, often described as Italianate in style, was built in 1853-56 by Chief George H M Johnson after his marriage to Emily Susanna Howells, his non-native bride. It was their family home until Chief Johnson's death in 1884. Here the youngest of their four children, E Pauline Johnson, was born in 1861. Her subsequent fame as an internationally renowned poet-performer eventually helped to bring recognition to Chiefswood, which opened as a museum in 1961.

As Sheila Johnston remarks in her biography: "The telling of Pauline Johnson's story begins in 1758 with the birth of her paternal great-

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Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands* (London, 1754).

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Robert Furber, *The Flower-Garden Displayed* (London, 1732).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Hyde, "Gender, Flowers, and the Baroque Nature of Kingship," in *Villas and Gardens in Early Modern Italy and France*, ed Mirka Benes and Diane Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 225-48.

grandfather, Jacob.”¹⁸ At the moment when Charles Hamilton was planting American kalmias or hickories at Painshill, the baby Jacob was travelling with his mother from the Mohawk River valley to a festival on the Niagara Peninsula. There he was baptized in the Christian faith. Sir William Johnson, superintendent of Indian Affairs, stepped forward to give his name to Jacob. Some years later, in 1784, during the aftermath of the American Revolution, nearly two thousand members of the Six Nations migrated north to settle along the banks of the Grand River, in the heart of what is now south-western Ontario.

It was on the newly designated Six Nations territory that Pauline’s grandfather, John “Smoke” Johnson was born in 1792. He fought as a warrior in the War of 1812. In 1813 Edward, Prince of Wales, decorated him “in recognition of your loyalty.” The British government subsequently requested that the Six Nations Council make Smoke Johnson a non-hereditary Pine Tree Chief. The Chief’s duties on the reserve included relaying the death cry up and down the Grand River. On Sundays he went to the Mohawk Chapel, and in the Mohawk language he read the Ten Commandments.

His son, George—Pauline’s father—spoke English and French. As matron of the family in a matrilineal culture, Smoke Johnson’s wife, Helen, chose her son George to succeed her brother as hereditary chief. It was a pedigree that went back to one of Hiawatha’s associates. Yet to some on the Six Nations here was a conflict of interest: father and son sitting on the Council simultaneously; the son serving as executive officer to a white superintendent; the son wishing to marry a white woman. Pauline Johnson was born to a father who acted as intermediary. Pauline inherited her grandfather’s oratorical flair, her grandmother’s independent spirit, and her father’s capacity to assume a double identity. Pauline had a habit as a sea-soned poet-performer of switching at the interval between Edwardian finery and a fanciful Indian costume inspired by a picture of Minnehaha.

This sense of double identity, real or fictitious, pervades the making of Chiefswood, then and now. Cross-cultural communion in Chief Johnson’s day has resonance in our world of Canadian multiculturalism. Yet, day-to-day conflicts impinge now as they did when George Johnson

¹⁸Sheila M F Johnston, *Buckskin & Broadcloth: A Celebration of E Pauline Johnson—Tekahionwake 1861-1913* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1997). Much of the material on the history of Johnson family that follows is derived from this work. See also Douglas Leighton, “George Henry Martin Johnson,” 1982 entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol XI (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 451-53; and Marilyn Rose, “E Pauline Johnson,” 1998 entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol XIV (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 536-38.

married and took his seat on the Six Nations Council. I found myself caught up as a player in a strange drama.

Back in 1996, following work on the house, a Historic Landscape Conservation Study was commissioned. I was asked to bring together in a single document historical data, site inventory, and preliminary archaeology. I submitted the report to the Six Nations and Canadian Heritage, Ontario Region, under the National Cost-Sharing Program in April 1998. It was meant to take six months. It took two years.

New archival images came to light. Especially remarkable are photographs of the grounds taken during the family's occupancy. They suggest how the blanket term "picturesque" that was previously applied is rather unsatisfactory. A photo from around 1880 shows Pauline with her siblings by the open window. There is a dog in the foreground, a massive flagpole, a kitchen wing, and carriage house to the left; there is also a rough meadow and scat-tered trees, one of which conceals the front door.

Apparently, on the same day, the photographer took a shot from the south. The black dog has come around. Pauline's brother Allen has a horse. Pauline materializes in a black dress in the upper central window. Below them is what we assume to be Chief Johnson's vineyard—an assumption reinforced through the remains of excavations. But what kind of landscape is this? How does it fit within the larger framework of an estate that once extended over 225 acres northwards from the Grand River?

Much has been made of there being an entrance from the river and an entrance from the road: twin faces of mixed cultural identity. We know that the interior of this doll's-house Palladian villa was furnished with fine china and a porcupine-quill table. We see in portraits of the family a certain dialectic of dress. Is the landscape likewise a product of Chief Johnson's role as an intermediary, a manifestation of his acting—sometimes close to play-acting—in a realm somewhere between the native and non-native worlds?

Probably the closest match between image and descriptive account is a report prepared by the Arts and Agricultural Association for the *Hamilton Spectator* in 1878. The members wanted to inspect the 800 walnut, 300 butternut and 200 hickory in Chief Johnson's "nut-bearing" groves. They described the 225 acres as a "lovely native park,"¹⁹ implying some aesthetic criterion in this highly productive estate. Pauline's sister's recollection of the "sanctuary" for wild and domesticated birds (including peacocks) certainly implies an interesting blend of the productive, the tame, and the uncultivated. Yet these photographs and fragmentary descriptive references were insufficient to reconstruct the original

¹⁹ See Johnston, *Buckskin & Broadcloth*, 45.

landscape in form and meaning. Later photographs, including aerial photographs from 1934, 1945, 1956, and 1977, permitted us to speculate on the possible evolution of the landscape over the span of a hundred years. But, until further archaeology is undertaken around the villa, the vision of Chiefswood in its hey-day—the period of Johnson residency, 1856 to 1884—remains conjectural.

The 1985 report—*A Biological Inventory of the Natural Environment of the Six Nations*—was useful in reconstructing something of the original biological life on the severely impoverished site.²⁰ The report commented on the lack of wildlife in the “severely fragmented and disturbed” woodlot. However, it also noted the size and majesty of some of the older trees. Our preliminary investigation confirmed the degraded quality of the understorey and ground flora by comparison with adjacent woodlots.

Ecological studies might, with archaeology, allow for further environmental reconstruction. But it seemed to me equally important to look at association and traditional knowledge through oral accounts; in other words, to shift the emphasis away from documenting the rather meagre physical remains. After initial deliberations in 1996, it became clear that the report would only be meaningful to the Six Nations if the community at large were involved. Thus, for example, I organized a workshop on 10 May 1997. I wanted to look at traditions of plant use and cultivation on the Six Nations within the wider context of nature conservation. Ken Parker, who runs the very successful nursery of native plants on the Six Nations, talked about his efforts in prairie regeneration. A presentation by Jack Lord of the Royal Botanic Garden, Hamilton, and Jim Skye, an elder on the Six Nations, was especially interesting. Traditional native remedies were related to studies undertaken for pharmacognosy. Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), it turns out—apart from yielding a tonic that restores the parts other tonics fail to reach—has always been regarded as useful in germinating corn. Jim Skye explained how it was known in a native expression as “there and back,” and how it could be mixed with corn and set in water to accelerate germination. Jack Lord suggested that it might contain some natural “fungicide” that helps protect the grain.

Mona Staats, also an elder on the Six Nations, entertained us afterwards in her heritage cabin—a cabin that is attached to a wildlife trail. As we drank the catnip and cedar-bark tea and listened to stories of how rattles were made and used, we were reminded of the point well

²⁰ Debra A Chamberlain, Ronald Diebolt, and Paul F J Eagles, *A Biological Inventory of the Natural Environment of the Six Nations Indian Reserve* (Waterloo: Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, 1985).

expressed in Tom Hill and Richard Hill's book *Creation's Journey*.²¹ For an artifact like a rattle to be meaningful, it must continue to function in ceremonies and ritual. In this sense, heritage is as much about living traditions as the authenticity of surviving material substance.

Just at the point when a vision seemed possible, tensions began to emerge in the wider process of community consultation on the Six Nations. It was one thing to explore traditional methods and as-sociations with elders, quite another to elicit a coherent set of conservation initiatives that the whole community wanted. The exercise of defining "values" through a Parks Canada workshop—the writing of a "Commemorative Integrity Statement"—seemed especially futile. The assumptions embedded in the formula for defining values appeared alien to native ways of thinking. What we would call "heritage" or "cultural landscapes" did not connect. Here Susan Buggey's 1999 study "An Approach to Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes" is useful.²² Susan does not deal with designed landscapes like Chiefswood, of course, nor does she grapple with cross-cultural hybridity. Nevertheless, her conclusions have relevance to defining significance in living landscapes that are primarily associative—understood in cosmological, mythological, or spiritual terms, and perceived through day-to-day encounters with the environment. She writes: "Bequeathed through oral tradition from generation to generation, Aboriginal traditional knowledge connects these spiritual relationships to the land through narratives, place names, sacred sites, rituals, and behaviour patterns that are tied to the spirits of the land."²³

Chiefswood does not have the associations of a sacred site. However, it may function as a place of traditional knowledge, a living landscape reconstructed through narrative as much as through material intervention. The problem is that the lives of Chief Johnson and Pauline Johnson do not lead to one obvious narrative. Their lives were conflicted as well as communicative, and the contested terrain of their times is compounded by a contemporary layer of tensions within the Six Nations. That tourism, economic development, and progress can be interpreted through opposing visions is all too apparent at Chiefswood. North of the site stands a large tourist centre, visible from the windows of Chief Johnson's villa. This view contrasts with the same view in 1880 when the meadow formed the foreground to the extensive estate landscape. Or

²¹ Tom Hill and Richard W Hill, eds, *Creation's Journey: Native American Identity and Belief* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

²² Susan Buggey, *An Approach to Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes* (Ottawa: Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, March 1999).

²³ *Ibid*, 33.

take the annual pow-wow at the end of July—an event that spills over onto Chiefswood’s woodlot. Here is a ritual occasion that embodies traditional values and brings in tourists. It may be beneficial to the community, yet the vehicles and mass movement have a detrimental effect on the site’s ecology. The most obvious sign of disjunction was when we were summoned to look at toxic matter dredged from the Grand River and dumped in the woodlot—seemingly a practice of the parks and recreation department to ease parking.

After extending the study process from six months to two years, I was obliged to venture some proposals.²⁴ It was agreed that rehabilitation—a new design constructed from historical data— provided the most appropriate strategy. My recommendations left the way open to further ecological and archaeological studies, but offered a vision to encourage community involvement. The heart of the concept was the productive-aesthetic estate in microcosm: nut-groves, orchard, vineyard, vegetable garden, tonic or healing garden, wood, and prairie. Ritual, oral tradition, and ancestral knowledge, were all located in the idea of reconstructing the kitchen wing as an intermediary space: where the products of garden and grove would be turned into food and preparations. Reinvestment in community festivities and in instructions by elders on day-to-day practice was crucial. Pauline’s poetry would form one part of complementary artistic programming. Narrative would link the two types of pro-gramming.

The meadow regeneration was the first test of this strategy. It gave us the opportunity to work with Ken Parker of the Sweet Grass Gardens. A community meeting was called to promote the environmental benefits of the meadow over lawn. Ken was the most eloquent spokesperson.

The first hitch soon came when we were confronted by the choice of a costly removal of the lawn, sod by sod, or the economical but environmentally undesirable application of Round-Up herbicide. The committee, including many representatives of the Six Nations, among them Ken Parker, as well as experts from Parks Canada, unanimously if uncomfortably agreed to follow the Round-Up route. Ken Parker was responsible for the application and proceeded in the spring with the establishment of prairie. The following summer, with the lawn scorched, a campaign was launched within the Six Nations to denounce the “poisoning” of the environment. There was a call for a ban on all spraying on the Six Nations. Through this troubling inversion and through the transference of the injury of all past injustices onto this one action, our best intentions and strenuous efforts at community involvement were nullified. The agenda had shifted beyond our control.

²⁴ Mark Laird, *Chiefswood National Historic Site: Historic Landscape Conservation Study*. Report submitted to Six Nations in 1998 and available on request from Paula Whitlow, Curator at Chiefswood.

A year later, when I had almost given up hope that the situation could be salvaged, I returned from Europe to find a message from the curator: had I seen the meadow? The summer of 2000 was one of the best meadow seasons in Ontario—wet and not too hot. But even that failed to prepare me for Ken's version of tall prairie: eight feet high in places, tall enough that you could mow a maze. In a mere acre or two you might be immersed in prairie as Pauline wrote in her poem "The Prairie":

I may not catch the largeness or its meaning
So infinite and perfected the whole

But this child-wisdom I am slowly gleaning
That thro' its silence I can reach its soul.²⁵

The summer of 2001 was at times hot and dry. The meadow was not as lush or tall, as in 2000 but paths were mown that allowed the visitor to experience a prairie from within. As the path emerges by the doll's-house villa with its reconstructed kitchen wing, visitors might almost feel in their "child-wisdom" that Pauline's birthplace is a spectral vision. Some on the Six Nations are happy with the project, others not at all. And perhaps there is no way to make the sadness of the villa's forlorn outlook go away. But there is a momentum from within the community. A healing garden is planned alongside the kitchen wing; catnip and cedar-bark tea will be served.

Unless we find a way, however, to resolve tensions within the community, or to solve the wider schism in our Western way of life, cultural or environmental degradation of one kind or another will destroy our best efforts at conservation. Ensuring water purity, repairing a depleted ozone layer, and, above all, reversing "global warming" through reduced consumption and sustainable energy-production are all prerequisites for conserving Chiefswood as well as Painshill. In this sense, planting reconstruction relies on mending attitudes and re-assessing our place in the cosmos. Such attitudinal reconstruction needs to take place on both sides of the Atlantic.

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For the complete text of this "uncollected" poem, see Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 131.