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In the summer of 1850, Herman Melville volunteered to ghost-write an agricultural report that would turn heads. A favor to his less-educated cousin Robert, chair of the Agricultural Committee in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, Melville's little-known report is an experimental georgic, a pastiche of early American farm writing. Echoing the mythic, utopian vision of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), he lauds Berkshire farmers' "efforts to…increase the quantity of…food which nourished our great progenitors in the Garden of Eden."[1] He celebrates the county's fertility, its "various kinds of fruit," and its "numerous, extensive and well cultivated fields of Corn," portraying an "exuberant" landscape rich in foodstuffs, ever-improving with the labor of farmer-citizens.[2] Drawing on agrarian ideals of small farming and democratic citizenship, Melville imagines a timeless, unadulterated utopia in the heart of New England.

Melville's agricultural report displays a lineage between American agrarianism and the notion of sustainability. It mingles idyllic, rural imagery with emerging concerns about "exhaustion of the soil" and "drain[s] upon the land."[3] Descriptions of the landscape's beauty and productivity appear alongside endorsements of composting and soil enrichment—of "saving every ingredient…which renovates exhausted lands, and returns to the earth those particles which have been drawn from it…enabling nature to reinvest herself."[4] Envisioning a renewal of agricultural resources, Melville's report presents sustainability, well before the term officially appears, in a Crèvecoeurian context of utopian agrarianism. In so doing, it calls attention to an unexamined American literary genealogy of sustainability. Scholars currently understand sustainability as a global and contempo-

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rary concept, officially defined in the UN's 1987 Brundtland Report as development that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[5] Yet as Melville's report suggests, sustainability emerges in part from the mythic ideal of agrarian utopia: a New World fantasy of demographic growth and agricultural abundance rooted in Jeffersonian agrarian principles of democratic farming and land-owning. Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx, and Annette Kolodny have analyzed versions of this ideal in American literary history, using phrases such as "the Garden of the World," "virgin continent" and "provider of sustenance."[6] Imagining a utopia of renewable resources that "meet[] the needs" of present and future generations, Melville's report gestures towards the integral role of this agrarian ideal and, more broadly, American literature in the development of sustainability discourses—a possible explanation for why the UN Brundtland Report reads as so oddly Jeffersonian.[7]

While Melville's report promotes agrarian principles and farming practices that we today associate with sustainability, his novel *Pierre* (1852), published the following year, inverts this agrarian ideal, depicting an unsustainable population through images of racial and sexual degeneracy.[8] In an 1852 letter to Sophia Hawthorne, Melville described his then-forthcoming novel with a fitting agricultural metaphor: "The next chalice I shall commend, will be a rural bowl of milk."[9] But rather than directly capture this small farming scene, *Pierre* portrays its very opposites, the two realms that Crèvecoeur and Thomas Jefferson condemn as wasteful and unproductive: an aristocratic estate and a densely-packed city, both of which are home to a dwindling and largely starving population, with no "rural bowl of milk" to sustain it. This inversion uncovers the racial and reproductive connotations of agrarian rhetoric more broadly. In the novel, the estate's diminishing agricultural fertility and the city's overpopulation emerge through interrelated images of racial mottling, sexual excess, and sterility. Portraying demographic and agricultural decline, *Pierre* articulates an unexamined reproductive subtext of the agrarian ideal: the idea that sexual disorder and racial intermingling enfeeble the fertility, vigor, and agricultural productivity of the American population.

Set in New York City and the Hudson Valley in the 1840s, *Pierre* dramatizes the fears of mid-century advocates of agrarianism—land reformers, labor radicals, and nativists who promoted the agrarian ideal as an alternative to what they saw as an increasingly unsustainable society. Worried about the population's growing inequality, density, and in some cases, racial and ethnic heterogeneity, these agrarian advocates deployed an early form of sustainability rhetoric. Critiquing aristocratic land-owning practices and lamenting the miserable condition of the urban poor and working class, they tended to describe the population of greater New York as degenerate, destitute, and damaging to

agriculture. They contrasted this declining population with a specifically *demographic agrarian ideal*—a sprawling, fertile, American population, evenly dispersed across small plots of abundant farmland. In its inversion of this ideal, *Pierre* realizes these agrarian advocates' worst nightmare, representing the notions of racial deterioration and licentiousness that often lurk within visions of demographic disaster.

Pierre's portrayal of population decline reveals the nineteenth-century agrarian roots of overpopulation anxieties—anxieties that bolstered eugenicist and nativist strains of sustainability discourse throughout the twentieth century.[10] In the past fifteen years, scholars such as Timothy Sweet, Edward Watts, and Edward White have reinvigorated the place of agrarianism in American literary criticism, uncovering rural, regional, and georgic literary histories which occasion, in White's words, a "rural electrification of early American studies."[11] This growing body of scholarship has tended to focus on the colonial, economic, and environmental features of early and nineteenth-century agrarianism rather than its reproductive undertones.[12] *Pierre,* however, suggests that the agrarian ideal of small farming is also a reproductive one, foreshadowing the eugenicist agendas of breeding an American agrarian race that emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century.[13] Moreover, in linking overpopulation, racial mixing, and the decline of small farming, the novel shows how nineteenth-century agrarian rhetoric prefigured and strengthened racist and exclusionary arguments for U.S. population control that still persist today. Scholars of biopolitics have begun to analyze these arguments, highlighting how, in the twentieth century, immigrants and non-whites came to represent demographic threats to an abundant, American environment.[14] *Pierre* provides an early warning sign of this darker form of sustainability rhetoric, one interested in *shaping* just as much as sustaining the American population.

Read as a demographic disaster, *Pierre* begins to present a different, more rigorous definition of sustainability than the Brundtland Report. Scholars such as Stacy Alaimo, Karen Pinkus, and Allan Stoekl have critiqued the Report's definition as vague, anthropocentric, and inattentive to the scale of geological time.[15] These critiques raise pressing questions about sustainability's meaning: What exactly are we aiming to sustain? Who are these "future generations"? What does it mean to "meet [their] needs?" *Pierre* begins to answer these questions by portraying what sustainability is *not*; in the novel, the population's racial and sexual degeneracy—its inability to breed an American agrarian race—forecloses its sustainability.

Depicting this degeneracy rather than the small farming scene, *Pierre* represents the lesser-known, dystopian side of American literary agrarianism. Indeed, the novel's agrarian subtext has remained largely unexamined because it is not easily recognizable as

agrarian. Written in the wake of Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Walden, three utopian farming experiments, *Pierre* seems like a dystopian outlier amongst its contemporaries—texts such as Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) that portray scenes of rural utopia and subsistence farming. While these texts directly represent agrarianism at work, *Pierre* stages "deeper secrets than the Apocalypse"—the nightmare which agrarian advocates so feared.[16] Perhaps this reversal of the agrarian ideal is what baffled Melville's earliest reviewers, who condemned *Pierre* as "a dead failure" and declared, upon the novel's release, "HERMAN MELVILLE CRAZY."[17] Despite its resonance with mid-century agrarian rhetoric, *Pierre*'s portrayal of unsustainability was perhaps too difficult to entertain, even in fiction. Yet this portrayal reveals how population anxieties drive and shape agrarian rhetoric just as much as the idyllic small farming scene.

Pierre's inversion of the agrarian ideal offers a different scale at which to read the novel, shifting from the plot of the family romance to its larger spatio-demographic context. With its themes of incest and inheritance, *Pierre* has occasioned a plethora of readings that analyze the family as the site of psychological, sexual, and national disruption as well as patriarchal and authorial anxiety. Critics have examined, for instance, *Pierre*'s familial poetics of individualism (Dimock), its genealogical plot of racial entanglement (Levine), its contrast between familial privacy and "queer sociality" (Castiglia), and, more recently, its "antifamilial sensibility" (Jackson).[18] Even as scholars analyze Melville as a taxonomic and demographic writer, *Pierre* remains characterized as a family romance, its relationship with agrarianism obscured.[19] Reading the familial plot as an index of the novel's demographic and agricultural framework, I recast *Pierre* as a drama of agrarian America's demise—one that imagines a racially degenerate, declining population, unsupported by the small, land-owning farmer. This racialized nightmare of overpopulation continues to drive nativist and racist forms of American sustainability rhetoric.

"Blades of grass" and Demographic Agrarianism

As a whole, *Pierre* enacts the hellish decline of a democratic, agrarian America. In the first few pages of the novel, the narrator invokes the demographic agrarian ideal, contrasting an expansive, egalitarian, American population with a crowded, monarchical Old World. As the novel shifts from this idealistic description to its aristocratic and overpopulated settings, it stages the breakdown of these Old World-New World distinctions—a breakdown which many mid-century advocates of agrarianism lamented and critiqued. Tracing Pierre's journey from his hereditary estate to an urban inferno, the novel portrays a world plagued with class divisions, starving tenant farmers and perverse, frenzied mobs. After

Pierre marries his alleged half-sister, Isabel, his mother disinherits him and he travels to New York City, a hostile, immigrant-filled, densely-packed environment. *Pierre*'s demographic context would alarm agrarian thinkers like Jefferson and Crèvecoeur; the novel depicts the aristocratic country—a setting described in terms of pastoral beauty rather than independent labor—and New York's urban underworld, teeming with villains, filth, and sexual depravity.

The novel's agrarian subtext becomes apparent in the first few pages, as the narrator distinguishes a democratic U.S. from an aristocratic Old World: "The monarchical world very generally imagines, that in demagoguical America…all things irreverently seethe and boil in the vulgar cauldron of an everlasting uncrystallizing present […] With no chartered aristocracy, and no law of entail, how can any family in America imposingly perpetuate itself?" (9). Describing a continuous present that takes priority over a genealogical past, *Pierre*'s opening recalls the principles of Jeffersonian agrarian land-owning that came to underwrite emerging conceptions of U.S. democratic egalitarianism. It puts in temporal terms Jefferson's 1776 proposal to eliminate entail in Virginia, which "would authorize the present holder to divide the property among his children equally…and would place them by natural generation on the level of their fellow citizens."[20] Such land-owning principles stemmed from the agrarian belief that farmers felt loyal to their community and responsible for their land—for keeping their surroundings populated, productive, and peaceful. As Jefferson famously declared in a 1785 letter to John Jay, "[c]ultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country…by the most lasting bonds."[21] Distinguishing "demagoguical America" from "the monarchical world," *Pierre*'s narrator invokes this national ideal of egalitarian property rights, civic participation, and the virtues of agricultural labor.

The narrator highlights the demographic dimension of Jefferson's land-owning principles, describing agrarian democracy as a population-level phenomenon: "In our cities families rise and burst like bubbles in a vat. For indeed the democratic element operates as a subtile acid among us; forever producing new things by corroding the old" (9). This acidic metaphor captures the corrosive and renewable quality of a democratic population, the larger ever-changing mass in which the family—insofar as it signifies status, lineage, and inheritance in aristocratic culture—becomes but a flexible and transient unit. These lines echo Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835), which states that "[a]mong aristocratic nations…families remain for centuries in the same condition [and] [a]mong democratic nations new families are constantly springing up, others are constantly falling away."[22] Demographic agrarianism, in this sense, is a process of gen-

erational renewal that occurs at the level of the population and keeps family and class status perpetually in flux.

This fluctuating population is not only renewable and democratic but also rich, vibrant, and fertile. The narrator compares "the democratic element" of the U.S. to a corrosive, green pigment called "verdigris:" "[N]othing can more vividly suggest luxuriance of life, than the idea of green as a colour; for green is the peculiar signet of all-fertile Nature herself. Herein by apt analogy we behold the marked anomalousness of America" (9). Here "verdigris" facilitates the process of demographic renewal whereby a self-perpetuating population not only produces a new generation, but also molts its old, crusty traditions. Evoking fecund, lush vegetation, this "analogy" suggests renewability, as *Pierre*'s narrator contends that "in America the vast mass of families be as…blades of grass" and "the grass is annually changed" (10). Rendering the English aristocracy "perishable as stubble, and fungous as fungi," and the U.S. a land of regenerative "grass," the narrator equates grass-like uniformity with equality. Indeed, the uniformity of grass characterizes the broad, democratic landscapes of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855): "a uniform hieroglyphic, / …Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones, / Growing among black folks as among white."[23] In *Pierre*'s opening book, "blades of grass" represent the U.S., agrarian population itself, collapsing renewability, fertility, and egalitarian uniformity in a single image of demographic perfection.

Rather than emphasize yeoman self-sufficiency and agricultural labor, as histories of agrarianism tend to do, *Pierre*'s opening book invokes the demographic agrarian ideal: an evenly dispersed, homogeneous population, and a country divided into small farms rather than a few fixed aristocratic estates. This vision assumes a broad, abundant space ripe for demographic sprawl, for pluralized population fertility rather than a singular, aristocratic lineage.[24] For many eighteenth-century demographic thinkers, this ideal rendered the U.S. exempt from overpopulation, from Thomas Malthus's thesis in *Essay on the Principles of the Population* (1798) that population tends to increase faster than its food supply. Figures such as Benjamin Franklin, Ezra Stiles, and later, Benjamin Rush and Jefferson encouraged and anticipated population fertility.[25] They believed that America, with its vast and fertile terrain, could accommodate and nourish a sprawling, laboring population.[26] Invoking this demographic agrarian ideal, *Pierre*'s opening book projects a "luxurian[t]" and "all-fertile" national future, a democratic population with room enough to "annually change[]" and expand (9–10). Jeffersonian agrarianism, as *Pierre* reveals, emphasizes not only the small farmer's dignity, but also the American population's sustainability.

Although *Pierre* initially conjures this ideal of abundance, its dystopian settings reflect just the opposite, the two realms that Jefferson contrasted with his agrarian vision. Pierre's family estate, where tenant farmers are at the mercy of their landlords, embodies what Jefferson observed, during his tour through France and Germany in 1785, as "uncultivated lands and unemployed poor," where "the laws of property…violate natural right."[27] *Pierre*'s second half displays the crowding, economic flux and delinquency that characterize the "mobs of great cities" of which Jefferson warned in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).[28] In Jeffersonian terms, these aristocratic and urban realms represent the imagined antitheses of the prolific New World: affluence and poverty rather than economic egalitarianism, inequality and anarchy rather than democracy. In *Pierre*, these "uncultivated lands" and lawless "mobs" appear *within* rather than outside of the U.S., challenging the notion of a "homogenous" agrarian nation closed off from extra-national and "monarchical" forces that, in Jefferson's words, threaten to "warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass."[29]

This inversion reflects what many mid-century agrarian advocates observed as the demise of the once-prolific American population into aristocratic and urban realms of turmoil. Indeed, by the mid-1840s and early 1850s, the threat of overpopulation and inequality loomed large, particularly in greater New York, motivating a surge of various forms of agrarian rhetoric that extended and diverged from Jeffersonian principles. Nativists extolled small farming as a "native" American lifestyle and bemoaned the influx of immigrants as the disruption of national "homogeneity," the increase of "idlers" rather than hard-working yeomen.[30] Meanwhile, labor radicals in New York City's National Reform Association and the Anti-Renters in the Hudson Valley created an urban-rural coalition, integrating mechanical laborers (those same "artificers" that Jefferson critiqued) into a broader working-class movement.[31] This coalition demanded control over the fruits of their labor and easier access to public lands.[32] As activists invoked agrarian principles, they did so largely in response to demographic changes which they believed threatened the population's health, morality, and very existence. For instance, as working-class advocate George Henry Evans wrote in "A Memorial to Congress" (1844), "the system of Land Traffic imported from Europe is…fast debasing us to the condition of a nation of dependant tenants, of which condition a rapid increase of inequality, misery, pauperism, vice, and crime are the necessary consequences."[33] Evans and many other reformers attributed the population's decline to the collapsing distinctions between Europe and the U.S.—distinctions which had bolstered Jefferson's vision of American abundance. Enacting this collapse, *Pierre* represents the intrusion of seemingly un-American tenden-

cies—aristocratic land-owning practices, impoverished masses, and political instability—into an otherwise pure, agrarian society.

Melville's more overtly international writings and extra-national settings experiment with these Old World-New World distinctions, the same distinctions propagated by Jefferson and adapted by mid-century agrarian advocates; his writings establish paradigms of population decay that, particularly in *Pierre*, infiltrate, warp, and reverse the demographic agrarian ideal. For example, *Redburn* (1849) captures the Old World's underfed masses, exhibiting a young American's Jeffersonian horror at Liverpool's "monstrous… multitudes of beggars."[34] Just over five years later, the Berkshire-born, Revolutionary War hero of *Israel Potter* (1855) would more directly experience these horrors, representing a London-based pauper who exemplifies a "Malthusian enigma in human affairs" and ultimately returns to the U.S. to see the ghosts of his agrarian youth.[35] Blurring these Old World-New World distinctions, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1855) continues these themes by portraying aristocratic excess and industrial sterility in a London-based brotherhood of celibacy and a New England-based, maids-powered mill. While the diptych sets up a contrast between heaven and hell, it depicts these realms as equally unproductive, highlighting the missing middle between them: the fertile earth. Permeating Melville's earlier writings, these paradigms of population decay prefigure *Pierre*'s inversion of the demographic agrarian ideal.

Like "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," *Pierre* is structured by a heaven-hell polarity that highlights the absence of agrarianism in the novel. This polarity conveys the material, moral, and sexual danger of extremes—in the equally decaying estate and city; in the happened-upon, philosophical pamphlet entitled "Chronometricals and Horologicals," which warns against "unconditional [self-]sacrifice" and "human demonism;" and in the "sweet unearthliness" of Pierre's blonde, blue-eyed fiancée, Lucy, and the "dark" allure of his estranged sister, Isabel (298–299, 456, 437–438). Ultimately, these heaven-hell contrasts blur together: visions of struggling tenant farmers from Pierre's aristocratic paradise pervade his hellish city life, Pierre's heavenly, "unconditional sacrifice" of marrying Isabel transforms into "demonism," and the angelic Lucy/Lucifer "Tartan" presents "devouring mysteries" perhaps just as dangerous as Isabel's (438). It is no coincidence that, at the close of the novel, Pierre declares "'tis merely hell in both worlds" (502). His universe of entangled extremes lacks a middle ground, a peaceful, fertile landscape of moral balance and agricultural labor, a demographic agrarian population as uniform and renewable as "blades of grass." Omitting this moral, agricultural, and demographic middle, *Pierre* imagines the horror of an unsustainable America.

Pierre's Unsustainable Estate[36]

Saddle Meadows represents the heaven of *Pierre*'s heaven-hell dichotomy, a paradise infused with aristocratic loftiness and the inverse of Jefferson's principles of democratic land-owning. Even amongst allusions to "blades of grass" and democratic regeneration, the narrator insists on the presence of a powerful, pure-blood American aristocracy. Pierre's family, the Glendinnings, represents one such aristocratic family, a tall-standing "oak" with a vast pastoral estate (10). Loosely based on the powerful Dutch patroon family the Van Rensselaers, central figures in the Hudson Valley's Anti-Rent War (1839–1846), the Glendinnings boast an aristocratic genealogy that spans back to the colonial settlers.[37] Their estate is one of the "Dutch Manors…whose meadows overspread adjacent countries—and whose haughty rent-deeds are held by their thousand tenant farmers" (12). In a reversal of democratic agrarian principles of small land-owning and self-sufficiency, the Glendinning estate spans far and wide, perpetuating a relationship of economic dependency between lords and tenants.

The description of Saddle Meadows throbs with a romantic aesthetic of ancestral pride and property ownership.[38] The novel opens with a figurative birthing scene that collapses property and reproductive perpetuity, the hero "issuing from the embowered and high-gabled old home of his fathers" as Pierre's "great genealogical and real-estate dignity" unite as one (1, 13). Far from a celebration of democratic land ownership and independent labor, this scene swells with noble blood and genealogical history, "hills and swales…ennobled by the deeds of his sires…sanctified through their very long uninterrupted possession by his race" (8). Thus Saddle Meadows presents not the humble homestead of the diligent yeoman, but rather a "Queen[ly]" countryside, a saccharine pastoral that celebrates aristocratic privilege and excess (16).

Even in this seemingly celebratory context, the novel's pastoral frames the landscape as unproductive and untouched by agricultural labor, evoking infertility and indolence. The setting appears unsustainable, its descriptions privileging rich and romantic features over agricultural yield. From Pierre's point of view, this estate looks largely uncultivated, consisting instead of hunting grounds, "tangled paths" for walking, and "ranges of mountains" and "primeval woods" (8, 13). For him, Saddle Meadows is a terrain for leisure and aesthetic pleasure rather than labor, a vast monolithic landscape rather than a series of small, harvested, independently-owned farmlands. This perspective contrasts with that of a laboring yeoman: Crèvecoeur's *Letters*, for instance, albeit referring to backwoods settlers, describes hunting as "a licentious idle life" in which "Europeans and new-made Indians" divide their time between "the toil of the chase,

the idleness of repose or the indulgence of inebriation."[39] What represents, in *Letters*, evidence of racial degeneracy—of a "mongrel breed" of settlers "contracting the vices of…Indians"—becomes coded in *Pierre* as aristocratic leisure that is just as indulgent and agriculturally unproductive.[40] Although *Pierre*'s narrator insists on its hero's "robust and healthy" rural "vigour," Pierre's "brown" complexion and "manly brawn and muscle" appear as high-class pretension—products of hunting, "riding," "boxing," "fencing," and "boating" rather than tilling the land (21, 5). Such a description serves to reinforce Pierre's effeminacy—his "white…ruffles," "dainty" arms, and "small…hands"—rather than deny it, portraying an effete lord in an uncultivated landscape (21).

Just as *Letters* associates hunters' idleness with their "mongrel" character, so too does *Pierre*'s narrator racialize the Glendinning's aristocratic genealogy, linking upper-class bloodlines to racial mixing. Contending that "our America will make out a good general case with England in this short little matter of large estates, and long pedigrees… wherein is no flaw," the narrator delineates a long-running monarchical tradition in the Americas: "old and oriental-like English planter families of Virginia and the South; the Randolphs for example, one of whose ancestors, in King James' time, married Pocahontas the Indian Princess, and in whose blood therefore an underived aboriginal royalty was flowing over two hundred years ago" (12).[41] Here the American aristocracy claims a protracted history of royal bloodlines, which appear racially heterogeneous by nature, determined by class status rather than racial homogeneity or European lineage. In fact, in this passage, *class* purity seems to emerge directly from racial intermarriage, as the "Randolphs" claim "underived aboriginal royalty…flowing" in their veins. Meanwhile, the narrator expresses in "oriental-like" terms the extensiveness of these estates: "far-descended meadows lie steeped in a Hinduish haze; an eastern patriarchalness sways its mild crook over pastures" (12). Saddle Meadows is one such estate, the "deeds" of this "ancient…Dutch Manor[]" bearing "the ciphers of three Indian kings" (5, 12). In this sense, indigenous royalty validates aristocratic property, freezing it in an eternal "Hinduish haze," while racial intermingling of bloodlines appears to bolster rather than degrade the land's familial status (12).

Yet this racialized history of American aristocratic families exhibits an anxiety of perpetuity, even as it insists on an unending futurity. Invoking "rent-deeds…held… so long as grass grows and water runs," "lawyer's ink unobliterable as the sea," and "fee-simples…cotemporise[d]…with eternity," the narrator describes a stationary society where entail and familial status remain unshakeable (12). Just as Ishmael insists on the future of the whale species in *Moby-Dick* (1851) by recalling their far-reaching historical existence "before the continents broke water," so too does *Pierre*'s narrator predict the

future of the aristocracy species based on their "ancient and magnificent" past (12).[42] Yet existence in the past does not guarantee a future, and given that aristocratic families are by definition exceptional, and therefore a small sect of the population, the narrator leaves us wondering whether the Glendinnings, to use Ishmael's words, "must not at last be exterminated…like the last man, smoke his last pipe, and then himself evaporate in the final puff"[43] (501). After all, aristocratic futurity relies on a single, patriarchal line rather than a sprawling demographic fertility.

A singular, "noble" youth with a "rare and choice lot," Pierre epitomizes the decline of the American aristocracy (15). Even in the first chapter, the Glendinning line appears less than remarkably fertile *because* it is patrilineal; Pierre stands as "the solitary head of his family," "companioned by no surnamed male Glendinning," plagued with "loneliness," the final son in a soon-to-be-extinguished family line, his position not unlike that of Roderick in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) (7). Implications of non-reproductive sex permeate Pierre's world and threaten the Glendinnings' future. The novel thematizes sterile incest in Pierre's flirtatious yet sisterly relationship with his mother, his homoerotic, "much more than cousinly attachment" to his rival cousin, Glen, and his sexual attraction to his long-lost sister, Isabel (301). Even the non-incestuous coupling of Pierre and Lucy proves unproductive.[44] In this seemingly glorious pastoral, images of impending sexual, economic, agricultural, and biological sterility shadow the estate: "a crumbling, uncomplete shaft," "the crumbling, corresponding capital," "Time left abased beneath the soil," and, in a reference to Shakespeare's hopelessly barren *King Lear* (1606–7), "Time crushed in the egg" (8). Decaying and sexually warped, the Glendinning family verges on extinction.

Faring no better than the Glendinnings themselves, the tenant farmers of Saddle Meadows show how this intensely classed pastoral runs counter to agrarian principles of democratic land-owning and small farming. "Distant" yet "neighboring," in the background yet nearby, these tenants are far from the independent land-owners of Jefferson's and Crèvecoeur's imagination, as they depend on Mrs. Glendinning, "that gracious manorial lady," and Pierre, who "shall one day be lord of the manor of" all of them (59–60). The hardships of tenant Walter Ulver, father to the seduced and ruined Delly, accumulate in his "*rented* farm-house" (155; emphasis mine). Meanwhile, the Millthorpes, who had "for several generations…lived on Glendinning lands," are forced to "abando[n] an ample farm on account of absolute inability to meet the manorial rent" (383). As a renter, old farmer Millthorpe suffers a life of destitution, evidenced in his "knobbed and bony hands, "low, aged, life-weary groans," and "trembling fingers," and his wife's "thin, feeble features" (386, 387, 385). Trapped on deteriorating land amongst a declining rural population, the tenant farmers in *Pierre* enact Jefferson's worst nightmare.

Pierre's portrayal of Saddle Meadows culminates in an image of agricultural sterility and small-farming extinction in the novel's penultimate book. This image affirms the estate's inversion of the demographic agrarian ideal. Delirious and famished in his urban apartment, Pierre envisions his ancestral manor surrounded by "hillside pastures" (477). These pastures appear "thickly sown with a small white amaranthine flower, which, being irreconcilably distasteful to the cattle…and yet, continually multiplying on every hand, did by no means contribute to the agricultural value of those elevated lands" (477). As this unfading flower envelops the pastures, "furnish[ing] no aliment for the mild cow's meditative cud" and sterilizing the manor's agricultural lands, the farmers fail to meet the production demands of their aristocratic landlord (480). "[D]isheartened dairy tenants" beg "the lady-landlord for some abatement" of their rent, blaming "the sterileness the amaranth begets" for their inability to churn out "rolls of butter" and maintain their lands (477). With ornamental rather than agricultural fertility, the amaranth represents an invasive weed, an undying, densely-packed flower that blights food production, as well as aristocratic pretension (as in Mrs. Glendinning's suffocating "amaranthiness") (4). This "immortal amaranth" outgrows the clumps of "mortal" catnip—the "dear farm-house herb" which sparsely surrounds "old foundation stones and rotting timbers of log-houses long extinct" (480). The amaranth thus extinguishes the utopian vision of small farming, leaving only farm-house ruins of a long-lost Jeffersonian dream.

The amaranth in Pierre's dream symbolizes, at least in part, the sterilizing and debilitating effects of aristocratic land-owning practices that informed the Anti-Rent movement. During this time, land reform advocates argued that tenant farming ultimately blighted agricultural production and caused the landless to go unfed. Tenant farmers proclaimed themselves homeless—deprived, as one anonymous Democrat contended in an 1845 issue of the *Albany Freeholder*, of "the hard-earned property…that will scantily enable them a subsistence."[45] Anti-Renters argued that, with no ownership over their means of "subsistence," farmers were more likely to resort to damaging agricultural practices that drained the soil and left them destitute.[46] *Pierre* recalls the Anti-Rent movement in its description of Saddle Meadows—the "regular armies…sent out to distrain upon three thousand farmer-tenants of one landlord" (13)—and seems to affirm the Anti-Rent rhetoric that framed tenancy as agriculturally damaging. The novel thus frames aristocratic land-owning as the unsustainable counterpart to Jefferson's vision of a productive, independent farming population.

As the pastoral descriptions of Saddle Meadows and the Glendinning family tree bring to life the aristocratic antithesis of the demographic agrarian ideal, they render the estate not just agriculturally debilitating but also racially heterogeneous and sexually

degenerate. These descriptions exhibit the economic and agricultural consequences of an aristocratic land-owning culture characterized by leisure and indulgence, sexual excess, and racial intermingling. In this context, dwindling agricultural fertility and an uneven distribution of land and resources emerge from an aristocratic tradition that favors racial entanglement, non-reproductive sex, and an increasingly infertile family line. Far from the demographic agrarian ideal of an expansive, egalitarian, small farming population, the economically unequal and generally unproductive population of Saddle Meadows is, by extension, reproductively challenged and racially and sexually degenerate—the mid-century nightmare of unsustainability realized.

Pierre's Unsustainable City

Pierre's portrait of unsustainability does not stop with the racially degenerate population of Saddle Meadows; after Pierre moves to the city, the novel connects urban overpopulation to racial intermingling and sexual excess. Pierre's decision to marry Isabel catalyzes his transition from rural to urban realms, as well as his encounter with his own familial, sexual, and racial disorder. Indeed, Pierre only begins to recognize his family's muddled history after meeting his alleged half-sister, who signifies both sameness and difference in her relation to Pierre, both consanguinity and foreignness. Supposedly the illegitimate daughter of Pierre's father and a French emigrant "forced to fly" from her country—which, as Robert Levine notes, could have been revolutionary France or Saint Domingue—Isabel's "dark, olive cheek" and "ebon" hair signal the racially amalgamated and multinational roots of the Glendinning family tree (104, 63, 505).[47] Isabel thus represents the homogeneity of shared bloodlines just as much as the heterogeneity of racially and nationally tangled bloodlines. Suggestive of foreignness, racial entanglement, and promiscuity, her character presents in microcosm the breakdown of familial organization and the racial and sexual confusion of a world devoid of agrarianism.[48]

In marrying Isabel, Pierre attempts to restore the seemingly lost purity of the agrarian scene—to establish democratic equality between an aristocratic heir and a farmhouse orphan. A foundling with foggy memories of a farmhouse upbringing, Isabel evokes a distant, rural past. In his loneliness as "solitary head of his family," Pierre feels a democratizing pull to place himself on "equal terms" with his estranged sister, to align shared blood with shared class status, to trade his aristocratic singularity for egalitarian plurality (7, 241). "Twice-disinherited," throwing off his status and property, he rejects aristocratic tradition to embrace an "everlasting uncrystallizing present" (277, 9). But the entrenched aristocratic character of Pierre's world forecloses the possibility of a demo-

cratic existence. Pierre's exit from the aristocracy signifies his entrance into poverty: as he approaches "the rustic double-casement" of Isabel's room, "he knows that his own voluntary steps are taking him forever from the brilliant chandeliers of the mansion of Saddle Meadows, to join company with the wretched rush-lights of poverty and woe" (156). There is no farming middle class in *Pierre*, no fertile earth between heaven and hell.[49]

Pierre's endeavor to level the socioeconomic distinction between him and his sister is also an attempt to neaten genealogical lines, restoring reproductive legitimacy and order to his disordered family. Yet this same endeavor is tinged with incest and perversity, further enmeshing Pierre in a web of familial confusion. As Isabel occupies the position of Pierre's half-sister, lover, and wife, she becomes a shape-shifter of familial roles, blurring reproductive origins and rendering familial relationships perpetually indeterminate. This indeterminacy rears its head at the close of the novel, as Isabel and Pierre examine a portrait called "The Stranger." While Isabel recognizes "shadowy traces of her own unmistakable likeness," Pierre observes in the portrait an "unequivocal aspect of foreignness, of Europeanness" that raises doubts about whether Isabel is actually his sister (460). In Pierre's acceptance of Isabel, he enters a world of sexual and familial chaos where Isabel is both strange and familiar.[50] This sexual confusion prevents him from restoring familial order and entering into a purified, democratic union with Isabel.

Pierre's ambiguous relationship with Isabel is racially menacing; suggestive of sexual immorality and tainted bloodlines, it mars the Glendinnings' history and forecloses Pierre from a peaceful, plentiful existence. Pierre's discovery of Isabel envelops his family lineage in "an all-pervading haze of incurable sinisterness," his bloodline becoming ever more clouded and uncertain. Pierre's mother, moreover, condemns her son's union with Isabel as dysgenic: "Thus ruthlessly to cut off, at one gross sensual dash, the fair succession of an honourable race! Mixing the choicest wine with filthy water from the plebeian pool, and so turning all to undistinguishable rankness!" (246, 271). This racial mixing also signifies a hereditary form of moral imperfection; after learning of his father's promiscuity, Pierre sees "specks and flaws in the character he once so wholly reverenced," as Isabel's story shrouds his father's life in "impenetrable yet blackly significant nebulousness" (94, 248). When Pierre attempts to recover his father's portrait after tossing it in the fire, his hand becomes "burnt and blackened," marked by the same "specks and flaws" as his father's character (277). These racial markers link Pierre to his father, calling into question Pierre's moral and sexual character and disqualifying him from a life of monogamy, moral and sexual discipline, and reproductive vigor.

Yet it is not just Pierre's or his father's sexual missteps that cause demographic disaster in the novel; degeneracy and discord are endemic to the urban environment

Pierre comes to inhabit. As Pierre, Isabel, and her ruined companion, Delly, enter the city, the setting becomes permeated with foreboding. The streetlamps appear "not so much intended to dispel the general gloom, as to show some dim path leading through it, into some gloom still deeper beyond" (320). Marking the group's transition from country to city, "some great change in the character of the road" produces "numerous hard, painful joltings, and ponderous, dragging trundling" in a changeover "most strange and unpleasant" to the harsh, cold reality of urban life (320–321). The uneven road foreshadows the city itself, which overflows with crime and perversion indexed by extreme contrasts and shocking colors; "flashing, sinister, evil cross-lights;" "scarlet-cheeked" girls of "unnatural vivacity;" and "sneaking burglars, wantons, and debauchees" register the miserable, congested, and corrupt state of a teeming, heterogeneous, population (331, 324).

The city's overpopulated yet unproductive character is embedded in these explicitly moral and sexual descriptions, as images of sterility and starvation pervade these scenes. More than just a jarring shift in the road, the pavement represents a human death-scape that contains "the buried hearts of dead citizens" (321). It portends a time "when all the earth shall be paved," evoking not only the heavily trodden grave-yard of *Redburn*'s Liverpool, but also, more generally, the disappearance of the fertile, nourishing ground (321). In fact, Pierre describes the pavement as both agriculturally and morally debilitating: "Milk dropped from the milkman's can in December, freezes not more quickly on those stones, than does snow-white innocence, if in poverty it chance to fall in these streets" (321). Signifying both nourishment and "innocence," milk epitomizes the moral and economic stability of agricultural production in a small farming context. In the city, milk and innocence "freeze…quickly" (321). Starvation and corruption loom. Markers of reproductive and material deficiencies such as "famishing beggars" and "old maids" comingle with "sluggards" and prostitutes, as moral, agricultural, and biological barrenness inflect the newcomers' first encounters with the city (323–324). In this landscape, it seems that Pierre, Delly, and Isabel might find, as Redburn does, a languishing woman with "shrunken," "meager" children in her arms—an image of fertility transmuted into death and demographic decline (209–213). Intermingled with suggestions of sexual excess, hints of material want and overpopulation distinguish the city not from Saddle Meadows, as it might seem, but rather a fainter, more distant, lost agrarian world.

As *Pierre* suggests, such a licentious population can erupt into a mob rule that forecloses the possibility of demographic agrarianism—of a peaceful, landed, democratic population. Soon after arriving in the city, the trio encounters a microcosmic urban mass condensed in a disease-ridden and unstable environment, similar to what Jeffersonian critics of the city might imagine. While Pierre looks for lodging, he leaves his companions at the police watch-house, where a "base congregation" accumulates:

> In indescribable disorder, frantic, diseased-looking men and women of all colours, and in all imaginable flaunting, immodest, grotesque, shattered dresses, were leaping, yelling, and cursing around him. The torn Madras handkerchiefs of negresses, and the red gowns of yellow girls…mixed with the rent dresses of deep-rouged white women, and… protruding shirts of pale, or whiskered, or haggard or moustached fellows of all nations… On all sides, were heard drunken male and female voices, in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, interlarded now and then, with the foulest of all human lingoes, dialect of sin and death, known as the Cant language, or the Flash. (335–336)

Unlike the Glendinnings and their long-running Dutch colonial lineage, these immigrants form part of an "outrageous orgy" that doubles as a "mob," a sexualized, racialized, "indoor riot" suggestive of the political turmoil that Jefferson sought to avoid in promoting a yeoman republic (337). A linguistically, racially, and culturally heterogeneous mass, "mixed" and "interlarded" together in a "notorious stew," this crowd conjures on earth the very "infernos of hell" (335, 336, 337). Here the sounds of non-English language represent "dialect[s] of sin and death," devilish tongues that emerge from the crowd's horrifying multiplicity (336). Racial and ethnic diversity merge with sexual anarchy; variations of women's skin color and men of "all nations" intermingle with their disheveled garments (335). The crowds' promiscuity, though non-reproductive, breeds disease and disorder across miasmatic "thieves'-quarters," "brothels," "infirmaries," and "cellar[s]" (336). Pierre worries that his companions may become "sucked into the tumult" and infected through "close personal contact" with the crowd, for in this instance of mob rule, of population pressure at its worst, sterilizing physical and moral maladies spread wildly (336).

With the watch-house mob, *Pierre* racializes and sexualizes the urban nightmare that drives mid-century proto-sustainability rhetoric, particularly as it exhibited an anxiety about changing U.S. demographics. The watch-house scene imaginatively animates the fears of nativists who, in the 1850s, reminded the public that Jefferson associated a native-born population with a "homogenous" government. Prominent physician and outspoken nativist Samuel Busey, for instance, in his *Immigration, its evils and consequences* (1856), recasts Jefferson's notion of governmental homogeneity as demographic homogeneity. Busey grounds his argument in the 1850 census, what he calls the "authoritative and indisputable…'facts and figures'" that demonstrate "the evils" of immigration.[51] Representing a "new era" in U.S. social demography, the 1850 census introduced categories such as birthplace, race, disability, and owned real estate, which called attention to the population's heterogeneity, and invited analyses of "statistics of crime," "origin of inhabitants," and "the number of paupers (native and foreign)."[52] While this demographic data may

have suggested that the nation's rural vigor was in danger, particularly to nativists, *Pierre* makes explicit the seeming racial and sexual features of these changing demographics. In the watch-house scene, anarchy emerges from heterogeneity and non-reproductive sex, suggesting that the "mobs of great cities" are by definition foreign, perverted, and racially mixed.[53]

The novel highlights the city's association with human and agricultural barrenness by depicting Pierre's demise into poverty in a similarly non-reproductive environment. Ultimately, Isabel, Delly, and Pierre join a secular, intellectual community at the Church of the Apostles, a building that, like many in the Old World, retains its "majestical name" even after becoming inactive (373). "Populous with all sorts of poets, painters, paupers," "foreign-looking fellows," and "indigent philosophers," the Apostles' inhabitants epitomize the materially deplorable conditions of urban life (371–375). The scholars subsist on "apple-parings, dried prunes," and "crumbs of Graham Crackers," their "lean ribs" and "meager bones" protruding in their steam baths (417–418, 419, 416).[54] As Pierre settles into a career of writing, he becomes malnourished, "pale," and lethargic, regularly fending off "sheer bodily exhaustion" and "deadly feeling[s] of faintness," allowing "devouring profundities" to "consume all his vigour" (418, 473, 425). Taken together, the descriptions of the Apostles and the watch-house portray the city as politically unstable and underfed, home to volatile mobs and starving artists. In this portrayal, instability and starvation code as foreign/racially diverse and celibate/non-reproductive, gesturing towards the racial and reproductive subtext of mid-century proto-sustainability rhetoric which promoted farm life over the degenerating city.

At first glance, it appears that disinheritance causes Pierre's plunge into poverty. As Pierre attempts to write at the Apostles, he resembles "a strange exotic, transplanted from the delectable alcoves of the old manorial mansion, to take root in this niggard soil. No more do the sweet purple airs…come revivingly wafted to his cheek. Like a flower he feels the change…his cheek is wilted and pale" (377). Here it seems that Pierre's loss of status brings a loss of sustenance.[55] He composes lines "plagiarised from his own experiences," reiterating the *Lear* reference from the novel's first book: "Lo! I hold thee in this hand, and thou art crushed in it like an egg from which the meat hath been sucked" (422). Signifying fertility, food, and status, this egg/meat image in *King Lear* foretells Lear's downfall; by cracking open the "egg" of his kingdom, by dividing the indivisible, by divesting himself of "the meat" of his royal office, Lear politically sterilizes himself. Similarly, Pierre's rejection of his familial inheritance seems to trigger a process of sterilization and decay that sucks up the "meat" of his existence in more ways than one: as he declares at the novel's close, "world's bread of life, and world's breath of honour,

both are snatched from me" (498). These lines suggest that Pierre's fall from aristocratic heaven causes his and his family's demise.

Perhaps the arduous process of printing *Moby-Dick* in the summer of 1851, in what Melville called the "babylonish brick-kiln of New York," inspired this infernal portrayal of *Pierre*'s Shakespearean end.[56] But despite evidence to the contrary, this hellishness does not so much distinguish the city from the Saddle Meadows as unite the novel's two settings—equally terrifying poles of an unsustainable America. Notably, Pierre's unprofitable and "idle" interest in writing begins not in the city but in the similarly wasteful Saddle Meadows (376). Flashbacks show Pierre's "discarded manuscripts" littering the estate, his scribbling attracting speculators "with a view to start a paper-mill expressly for the great author" (an anticipatory gesture towards another "Tartarus" of Melville's) (366–367). Pierre's writerly passions signify a lack of agricultural productivity: "The mechanic, the day-labourer, has but one way to live; his body must provide for his body. But not only could Pierre in some sort, do that; he could do the other; and letting his body stay lazily at home, send off his soul to labour" (364). This same form of "soul" labor emerges in the figure of Charles Millthorpe, an Apostles-dweller and farmer's son who once lived at Saddle Meadows. "Averse to hard labor," Millthorpe "indignantly "spurn[s] the plough" and fails to place his family "in a far more comfortable situation" after his father's death (387–388). Embodied in Pierre and Charles, urban intellectualism stands as an antithesis of small farm labor, one that begins at Saddle Meadows. In this sense, *Pierre* looks less like a hero's demise from an aristocratic heaven to an urban hell and more like a singular, dystopian reflection of a world without agrarianism.

Linking the aristocratic country and the overpopulated city through their shared anti-agrarian character, *Pierre* resonates with 1840s proto-sustainability rhetoric that promoted the demographic agrarian ideal as a solution to greater New York's economic inequalities. In the *Working Man's Advocate*, Evans invoked Jeffersonian principles and attacked vested land rights, declaring that "landlordism" had caused "thousands upon thousands of cases of pinching want, if not many of actual starvation."[57] Citing a similar problem in the city, Evans and other members of the National Reform Association published a report in the *Advocate* that noted "an increasing population, the great majority of whom depend for a subsistence on Mechanical labor," "leav[ing] no hope for the future."[58] Proposing a migration to the West, the report connected population pressure to unequal land access and reconceived of a plentiful space of utopian possibility: "We are the inhabitants of a country which for boundless extent of territory, fertility of soil and exhaustless resources…stands unequalled by any nation."[59] Dreaming of an "exhaustless" future in

the "withering" present, the National Reform Association looked to the demographic agrarian ideal as a solution to unsustainability in both the urban and rural spheres.

Pierre represents this unsustainability in both Saddle Meadows and the city through intertwined images of agricultural sterility, reproductive failure, and racial heterogeneity, images epitomized in the novel's final scene. After Pierre murders Glen and "extinguishe[s] his house," he announces to Lucy and Isabel that he is "neuter now"—unsexed and sterilized, his family lineage snuffed out (503). Next, Pierre grasps for a secret vial of poison around Isabel's neck, saying "in thy breasts, life for infants lodgeth not, but death-milk for thee and me!" (503). As the hinge between the two regions, the motivation for Pierre to leave Saddle Meadows for the city, Isabel also represents the reproductive and agricultural failure that characterizes both realms. Though she comes from a dairy farm on the Glendinning estate, she offers not life-giving milk for children but rather "death-milk"; the symbol of agricultural and human sustenance as well as reproductive futurity transforms into an instrument of extinction. Moreover, this vial of "death-milk" reflects the "dark vein" that links Isabel to Pierre, the racial blood that has "burst" in the novel's final scene.[60] A nourishing resource turned deadly, this "death-milk" collapses sterility, extinction, and racial intermingling in a singular image of unsustainability, signifying the racial, reproductive, and agricultural decline of a society devoid of agrarianism.

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With its barren landscapes and starving populations, *Pierre* perhaps reflects Melville's own disillusionment with agrarianism. Soon after his agricultural report was printed in the *Culturalist and Gazette*, the paper's editor criticized Melville for neglecting to address the harsh realities of farm labor, realities that Melville came to understand in the following year. In the fall of 1850, shortly before the report was published, Melville purchased Arrowhead, his own rural utopia, complete with a view of Mount Greylock, the Massachusetts mountain to which he would dedicate *Pierre*.[61] But during that year, as Melville finished *Moby-Dick*, as his family grew and financial pressure mounted, his constant "plowing and sowing…and printing and praying," as he put it, rendered farm life more of a strain than a blessing.[62] When he began writing *Pierre* at the end of 1851, Melville was struggling to maintain his farm and feed his family, an experience that perhaps fueled a novel that turns agrarian utopia on its head.

Melville's agricultural endeavor, his very own "life in the woods," is a largely forgotten chapter of American literary history, one that Jay Leyda, and more recently, Kathryn Cornell Dolan have begun to recover.[63] The contrast between the beginning

and end of this episode, between Melville's agricultural report and *Pierre*, is particularly telling. Articulating an early version of sustainability, the report resonates with the sentiments of Melville's uncle, Thomas Melvill Jr., who declared in his 1815 address to the same Berkshire Agricultural Society that "discoveries made in the cultivation of the earth, are not merely for the time and country in which they are developed, but they may be considered as extending to future ages."[64] Early sustainability sentiments such as these implicitly promote an agrarian ideal of demographic fertility and agricultural abundance, emphasizing, as the UN's Brundtland Report does, "meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." But *Pierre* imagines a world without "cultivation of the earth," without "future ages."[65] The strange counterpart to the more familiar georgic world of Melville's report, *Pierre* depicts what many advocates of agrarianism lamented at the time: the degeneration of an American population unsupported by small farm labor, ruled by aristocratic excess and seething mobs, much like the Old World.

Structured by a heaven-hell dichotomy that blurs into a single, catastrophic world, the novel reverses the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal in its aristocratic and urban settings, evoking dwindling population fertility, agricultural sterility, and vast economic inequality. Yet the population in *Pierre* is unproductive, underfed, and increasingly infertile because of its racially and nationally heterogeneous and sexually degenerate character. Images of racial intermingling and non-reproductive sex are so entangled with those of declining agriculture, overpopulation, and meager resources in the novel that they become inextricable, even synonymous. In *Pierre*, the American population's sustainability is determined by its ability to breed an American agrarian race. In this sense, *Pierre* suggests that the demographic agrarian ideal of "blades of grass"—of democratic equality, economic uniformity, and horizontal sprawl—is also a racial and reproductive one, that agrarianism seeks to avoid racial, sexual, and moral degeneracy just as much as agricultural barrenness and overpopulation.

Pierre functions as an American literary prequel to the global crises projected in the Brundtland Report. Driven by similar fears of overpopulation and agricultural barrenness, the Brundtland Report parallels the agrarian rhetoric of Melville's time. Indeed, the document reads as a Jeffersonian condemnation of an unsustainable global society, describing two major contributing factors to the crisis of sustainability: the waste and excess of the affluent and the poverty, crowds, and pollution of cities.[66] Set in aristocratic and urban contexts, *Pierre* enacts this crisis in microcosm. Equating unsustainability with the reproductive consequences of sexual excess and racial intermingling, *Pierre* begins to expose what Jennifer C. James calls "the disavowed racial matter of the environmental

unconscious."[67] A sustainability crisis realized, *Pierre* enunciates the dystopian possibility that shapes and motivates the Brundtland Report, highlighting the ideas of racial and sexual degeneracy implicit in our imaginaries of environmental and economic catastrophe.

Notes

1. Herman Melville, "Report of the Committee on Agriculture," *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces 1839–1860* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 450.
2. Ibid., 449–450.
3. Ibid., 451.
4. Ibid., 450.
5. The World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 8.
6. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 124; Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 2; Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 9.
7. The World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 8.
8. Scholars such as Paul B. Thompson and Gillen Wood have alluded to U.S. literary agrarianism as an early version of sustainability. See Paul B. Thompson, *The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010); Gillen Wood, "What is Sustainability Studies?" *American Literary History* 24.1 (Spring 2012): 1–16.
9. Melville, Correspondence, 219.
10. *Pierre* anticipates the catastrophic visions that attended 1960s concerns about "the population bomb." Many predicted that, because of overpopulation, Americans would face crime, sexual promiscurity, and riots in addition to environmental destruction. See Thomas Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 104.
11. Edward White, *The Backcountry and the City: Conflict and Colonization in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv.
12. Timothy Sweet, *American Georgics: Economy and Environment in Early American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Edward Watts, *An American Colony: Regionalism and the Roots of Midwestern Culture* (Athens, OH: The Ohio University Press, 2002); White, *The Backcountry and the City.* This scholarship includes the longer tradition of Marx, Kolodny, and Smith, as well as Lawrence Buell. While Marx and Buell have tended to discuss agrarianism under the rubric of what they call the pastoral, critics such as William Conlogue and Sweet have differentiated between agrarian and pastoral paradigms. Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination:*

Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); William Conlogue, *Working the Garden: American Writers and the Industrialization of Agriculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). See also Janet Fiskio, "Unsettling Ecocriticism: Rethinking Agrarianism, Place, and Citizenship," *American Literature* 84, no. 2 (June 2012): 301–325; James A. Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism: From Hunter-Gatherer to Agrarian Radical in Western Culture* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1989); Kimberly K. Smith, *Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition: A Common Grace* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003).

13. For scholarship on early twentieth-century eugenicist agendas of breeding an American agrarian race, see Janet Galligani Casey, *A New Heartland: Women, Modernity and the Agrarian Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Maria Farland, "Modernist Versions of Pastoral: Poetic Inspiration, Scientific Expertise, and the 'Degenerate' Farmer," *American Literary History* 19, no. 4 (December 2007): 905–936; Laura L. Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family, 1890–1938* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
14. This scholarship examines how neo-Malthusian discourses of population control facilitate certain forms of biopolitical governance. Mitchell Dean, "The Malthus Effect: population and the liberal government of life," *Economy and Society* 44, no. 1 (February 2015): 18–39; John Hultgren, *Border Walls Gone Green: Nature and Anti-Immigrant Politics in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Kolson Schlosser, "Malthus at mid-century: neo-Malthusianism as bio-political governance in the post-WWII United States," *cultural geographies* 16, no. 4 (October 2009): 465–484. For a history of neo-Malthusianism and environmentalism that also features eugenics, see Robertson. Beyond these studies of overpopulation discourse, other prominent examples of scholarship that engage Foucauldian and biopolitical thought include Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, "The Problem of Population and the Form of the American Novel," *American Literary History.* 20, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 667–685; and Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). These works focus on reimagining nation-based genealogies of the novel (Armstrong/Tennenhouse) and revealing the centrality of race in constructions of the human (Weheliye).
15. Alaimo suggests that sustainability's definition evokes an "environmentalism without an environment," while Pinkus points out that it focuses too narrowly on "the human time of the now and near future" (Alaimo 562, Pinkus 72). Stoekl raises a plethora of questions about sustainability such as: "Sustainability only for humans?" and "What is the timescale?" (41). Stacy Alaimo, "Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures," *PMLA* 127, no. 3 (May 2012) 558–565; Karen Pinkus, "The Risk of Sustainability" In *Criticism, Crisis, and Contemporary Narrative: Textual Horizons in an Age of Global Risk,* ed. Paul Crosthwaite. (London: Routledge, 2011) 62–80; Allan Stoekl, "'After the Sublime,' after the Apocalypse: Two Versions of Sustainability in Light of Climate Change," *diacritics* 40, no. 3 (2013): 40–57.
16. Herman Melville, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), 381. All subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

17. *The Albion*, August 21, 1852, in *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews,* ed. Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 426; *New York Day Book*, September 7, 1852, in *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 436.
18. Christopher Castiglia, *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Wai Chee Dimock, *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Holly Jackson, *American Blood: The Ends of the Family in American Literature, 1850–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Robert S. Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
19. For readings of taxonomy and demography in Melville's sea writing, for instance, see Hester Blum, *The View from the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
20. Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson. (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 32–33.
21. Ibid., 818.
22. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 585–586.
23. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan. (New York: Library of America, 1982), 31.
24. As Farmer James in *Letters* asks, "Many ages will not see the shores of our great lakes replenished with inland nations, nor…entirely peopled…Who can tell the millions of men whom it will feed and contain?" J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 41.
25. James H. Cassedy, *Medicine and American Growth, 1800–1850* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).
26. Unlike the "perishing births of Europe," Jefferson contended, the U.S. contained an "immense extent of…fertile lands" that permitted "every one…to raise a family of any size." Jefferson, Writings, 1144.
27. Ibid., 841–842.
28. To Jefferson, cities were full of "artificers," what he described as "the panders of vice, and the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overturned." Ibid., 818.
29. Ibid., 211.
30. Samuel C. Busey, *Immigration: Its evils and consequences* (New York: DeWitt and Davenport, 1856), 9; Frederich Rinehart Anspach, *The Sons of the Sires: A History of the Rise, Progress, and Destiny of the American Party* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1855), 68. Also see *The Wide-Awake Gift: A Know-Nothing Token for 1855* (New York: J.C. Derby, 1855). This anthology of the "choicest flowers of native Eloquence and Poetry" included a poem entitled "The American Farmer," which celebrated the independence and egalitarianism of the agrarian "native" lifestyle (249).
31. Jefferson, Writings, 818.

32. For discussions of how Anti-Renters and labor radicals adapted agrarianism and joined forces, see Reeve Huston, *Land and Freedom: Rural Society, Popular Protest, and Party Politics in Antebellum New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 107–129; Thomas Summerhill, *Harvest of Dissent: Agrarianism in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 61–88.
33. George Henry Evans, "A Memorial to Congress," In *American Georgics: Writings on Farming, Culture, and the Land,* ed. Edwin C. Hagenstein, Sara M. Gregg, and Brian Donahue. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 87.
34. Herman Melville, *Redburn* (New York: The Modern Library 2002), 216–217.
35. Herman Melville, *Israel Potter* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 185.
36. I am indebted to Robert Markley for his use of the phrase "the unsustainable estate" in his talk of the same title at Rice University in February of 2014.
37. Critics have speculated that the Glendinnings are indeed based the Van Rensselaer family, descendants of Melville's Dutch ancestors on his mother's side—the most prominent landowners in the Hudson Valley and the villains of the Anti-Rent War. See Samuel Otter, *Melville's Anatomies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 199.
38. Critics have referred to Saddle Meadows as "an over-compensatory Eden," "an insanely pastoralized opening," and a "chivalric romance" of "intense feudalism," Henry Murray, introduction and notes, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities,* by Herman Melville (New York: Hendricks House, 1949), xxxvi; Eric Sundquist, *Home as Found: Authority and Genealogy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 150; Nicola Nixon, "Compromising Politics and Herman Melville's *Pierre*," *American Literature* 69, no. 4 (December 1997): 719–741, 722. Also see Samuel Otter, "The Eden of Saddle Meadows; Landscape and Ideology in *Pierre*," *American Literature*. 66, no. 1 (March 1994).
39. Crèvecoeur, Letters, 53.
40. Ibid., 52–53.
41. Jennifer Greeson suggests that Pierre has a southern planter affiliation that contrasts with Melville's authorial supremacy. *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 201–202.
42. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 503–504.
43. Ibid., 501.
44. As Nicola Nixon puts it, the Glendinnings are "an atrophied aristocracy trembling on its last legs." "Politics," 730.
45. *The Albany Freeholder*, November 26, 1845.
46. See David Maldwyn Ellis, *Landlords and Farmers in the Hudson-Mohawk Region 1790–1850* (New York: Octagon Books, 1967), 230–231.
47. Levine, Dislocating, 156.
48. Anna Brickhouse describes Isabel as a "Franco-Africanist figure," suggestive of "transamerican racial crossings." *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 244.245.

49. This is why, as John Carlos Rowe notes, the novel abruptly "changes the subject from rural to urban issues." *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 69.
50. As Elizabeth Dill puts it, "one cannot mark differences in ways that organize and stratify others and still sustain the equality of democracy, but without those means, one cannot be sure his wife is not also his sister." "That Damned Mob of Scribbling Siblings: The American Romance as Anti-Novel in *The Power of Sympathy* and *Pierre*," *American Literature* 80, no. 4 (December 2008): 707–738, 714.
51. Busey, Immigration, preface.
52. J. D. B. DeBow, *[Compendium] Statistical View of the United States, based upon the several official returns, from the earliest period, and embracing a compendium of the census of 1850* (Washington, D. C.: Beverly Tucker, 1854), 12; *Report of the Superintendent of the Census* (Washington, D. C.: Robert Armstrong Printer, 1853), 3.
53. Jefferson, Writings, 818.
54. Sylvester Graham invented graham crackers as part of a larger campaign to curtail sexual desires through diet. It seems in *Pierre* that the intellectuals at the Apostles consume too many Graham crackers, for they lack sexual desires so much that they are do not reproduce at all. *A Treatise on Bread, and Break-Making.* (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1837) 124.
55. In the final pages of the novel, Pierre is increasingly "haunted," as Priscilla Wald notes, "by images of food, the body, and employment," images that collapse sustenance with aristocratic honor. *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 153.
56. "Brick-kiln" is perhaps one of Melville's keywords for urban hellishness; in *Redburn,* the protagonist asks "is Liverpool but a brick-kiln?" (185). Melville, Correspondence, 195.
57. George Henry Evans, "The Anti-Rent Troubles," *Working Man's Advocate,* December 28, 1844.
58. The National Reform Association, "To The People of the United States," *Working Man's Advocate*, July 6, 1844 in *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, Volume VII*, ed. Commons, John R., Ulrich B. Phillips, Eugene A. Gilmore, Helen L. Sumner, and John B. Andrews (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1910), 295.
59. Ibid., 297.
60. See Levine, Dislocating, 161.
61. Melville entertained the idea of his farm as an agrarian utopia in a letter written to Evert Duyckinck just three days before the agricultural report was published, where he described Arrowhead as nothing short of idyllic: "the heavens themselves looking so ripe and ruddy, that it must be harvest-home with the angels" (*Correspondence* [Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1993], 69).
62. Melville, Correspondence, 195. Melville wrote this in a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne on June 29, 1851. Under the weight of financial pressures, Melville began trying to sell Arrowhead by 1853. Ten years later, his brother Allen finally bought the abandoned farm. So the story of Arrowhead

is one of the failure of agrarian utopia, at least for Melville. See Jay Leyda, "White Elephant vs. White Whale," *Town and Country* 101, (August 1947): 379–380.

63. Kathryn Cornell Dolan, *Beyond the Fruited Plain: Food and Agriculture in U.S. Literature, 1850–1905* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Leyda, "White Elephant"
64. Thomas Melvill Jr. *Address of Thomas Melvill, Jun. Esq. Delivered before the Berkshire Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Manufactures* (Pittsfield, MA: Phineas Allen, 1815), 11.
65. Ibid.
66. For instance, the report identifies the ever-widening "gap between rich and poor nations" as a central challenge to sustainability. Moreover, it stresses that "poverty itself pollutes the environment […] Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive." Our Common Future, 2, 28.
67. Jennifer C. James, "'Buried in Guano': Race, Labor, and Sustainability," *American Literary History.* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 115–143, 118.