



Winter 2014

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Myers, James P., Jr. "J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's Niagara: Redefining a Sublime Landmark." *Pennsylvania History* 81.1 (Winter 2014), 1-50.

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Keywords

Crèvecoeur, Niagara peninsula

Disciplines

English Language and Literature | History | United States History

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NIAGARA: REDEFINING A SUBLIME
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James P. Myers Jr.

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Like many of the nineteenth-century artists who followed him, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur was fascinated by Niagara Falls. Although Crèvecoeur did not actually visit the Falls in the years he claims, 1785 and 1789, his two narratives about them

reshaped Enlightenment views of the sublime into a Romantic myth: initial eighteenth-century terror gave way to a transcendent vision of the beautiful. Ultimately, Crèvecoeur drew his readers from isolated, static inaction or paralysis before natural wonder into a new communal consciousness of order, social harmony, and the expectation of future progress.

Near the end of the eighteenth century, more than any other natural phenomenon in North America, the difficult-to-access Niagara Peninsula represented a dramatically vivid and rich middle ground where the wildness of nature might be tempered by the civilizing energies of enlightened individuals working in concert to create gardens or oases of culture. By first exposing the viewer to darkness and opacity, to the fear of annihilation in the Abyss, then compelling the viewer to confront and clarify that fear and confusion through meditation, the Falls force the observer eventually to embrace the world of light, with its pleasures and harmony.¹ This in turn resulted in a brief period—a generation at most—in which the success of civilizing Niagara could be appreciated and enjoyed by the few, and specifically by such artists and writers such as Crèvecoeur. Niagara Falls in its pristine state was as close to an Epicurean ideal as may be imagined: that it would so endure only a brief time and be experienced by only a small number of people was part of the pleasure Crèvecoeur and a few contemporaries could share. Chaos and order, the sublime and the beautiful, could be harmonized by artists and poets who could then translate them into a landscape untouched by time.

This rare poetic power, of not only knowing how the polar opposites of the terrifying and beautiful might be united, but also how to express such ineffable experiences, is one of the achievements tacitly celebrated in Crèvecoeur's two narratives. His later account, however, carries what becomes the Romantic synthesis of the sublime and the beautiful to a darker prospect. Poets communicate; the vast majority of the race does not, and cannot. Beyond simply lacking verbal resources, absorbed in their own obsessions and hobbyhorses, most people fail to appreciate sublimity because they do not listen to one another. Chasms as deep as that carved by the Niagara River lie between most individuals who are forever denied entrance into that magic realm.

The very success, moreover, with which colonists create a middle ground between the wilderness and the decadence of older, civilized centers (such as Europe and the eastern seaboard of North America) dooms the effort to perpetuate Niagara's sublimity to ultimate failure. For, as it became increasingly accessible, as people flocked there to exploit the peninsula's abundant agricultural

and commercial opportunities, the delicate balance between the wild and the civilized tilted increasingly in one direction—toward “progress”—in time actually evolving into entropy or worse. In his last exploration of Niagara, Crèvecoeur thus saw beyond the Romantic myth. He of course could not foretell in detail how in time the peninsula—the American side, at least—would become an ecological wasteland, with the US Army Corps of Engineers able to “turn off” the Niagara River at will. But Crèvecoeur did intuit what it was about Niagara that served both as the focus for the eighteenth-century’s discussions of the sublime and for the Romantic period’s synthesis of the sublime and the beautiful that caused the myth to consume itself.² Together, these two dangers—humanity’s inability to communicate and the dangers of Niagara’s evolving accessibility to increasing numbers of people—become underlying, and disturbing, themes of Crèvecoeur’s writings on Niagara.

In 1801 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, author of the literary masterpiece *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), published his last major work, *Voyage dans la haute Pensylvanie et dans l’état de New York*.³ Dedicated to George Washington, who had died in 1799, and appearing during the year his friend Thomas Jefferson became president, the *Journey* (as it is known) has long challenged the few commentators who recognize the work’s importance in defining Crèvecoeur’s complex, though principally enthusiastic, appreciation of the new republic born in 1776. The travelogue was fictionally presented as a translation into French of a manuscript in English salvaged from a shipwreck “at the mouth of the Elbe River” (xv), and thus badly water damaged; the travelogue’s author, as the “translator” reports, is a mystery: “in no part of the book did I discover the name of the author, who in some chapters designated himself as an adopted member of the Oneida tribe [named “Kayo”], and in others only by four initials which I have indicated at the close of the dedication letter” (xviii), that is, “S. J. D. C.,” presumably St. John (or Jean) de Crèvecoeur. This well-established convention of eighteenth-century travel writing should alert the reader to the work as imaginative or as a mixture of fiction and truth, a fact often overlooked.⁴

In narrating his 1789 visit to Niagara Falls in the *Journey*, S. J. D. C. or Kayo observes that “although I had twice seen the celebrated Niagara Falls, the season being favorable for travel, I decided to accompany Mr. Herman whose enthusiastic invitation I could not refuse” (255). The date of Crèvecoeur’s first encounter with the Falls is not known. He might have viewed them when he served with the French army during the French and Indian War, but more probably he explored Niagara on his return from Sir Robert Hooper’s

1767 expedition into Britain's newly acquired trans-Appalachian territories.⁵ Crèvecoeur documented his second visit in a letter he addressed to his elder son Guillaume-Aléxandre (known as Ally). Translated, transcribed, and published in 1878 by O. H. Marshall from the original possessed by Crèvecoeur's great-grandson, Robert, the narrative describes events that supposedly took place between July 11 and 13, 1785.⁶

Crèvecoeur's two narratives securely place him within a long-standing literary tradition reaching as far back as Samuel de Champlain's 1604 brief description of the Falls. This tradition only acquired full generic form when the Recollect missionary Father Louis Hennepin published his first description in 1683, which he revised, expanded, and fancifully embellished with invented details in subsequent editions, earning him the nickname *le grand menteur*, "the great liar."⁷

Swedish botanist Pehr Kalm produced the next significant account of the Falls. Written in English and first published in 1750, Kalm's letter, in the assessment of Charles Mason Dow, generally followed Hennepin's account.⁸ Notwithstanding, Kalm approached his descriptive task far more objectively, correcting Hennepin's exaggerations and misrepresentations, and employing scientific discipline to restrain the hyperbole and extreme emotional responses to the geographic sublime voiced by earlier writers.⁹

Crèvecoeur's narrative of his July 1785 exploration is almost universally acknowledged as the next most important record of Niagara left by a European American traveler. Commentators consistently praise his attention to detail, the accuracy of his description, and the precision of the map he provided and integrated into his account. Frank H. Severance, for example, writes that Crèvecoeur's account is "indubitably trustworthy, and his map is unequalled, in that period, for accuracy and useful data."¹⁰ Several critics, however, have noted that Crèvecoeur could not have explored the Falls on the dates recorded in the letter because he had left New York City in June of that year for France.¹¹ Although they excuse the discrepancy as more evidence of Crèvecoeur's widely recognized bad memory or carelessness with dates, Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau recall the significant fact that Crèvecoeur's return to France was actually a leave-of-absence from his duties as French consul in New York, one he had requested the year earlier because of poor health: "in the summer of 1784 Crèvecoeur began to worry again about his health . . . He asked . . . permission . . . to return to France for six months to rest and consult French physicians."¹² In short, he hardly enjoyed the stamina and strength needed to endure twice, no less one time, the physically taxing descents and ascents of the Niagara gorge he narrates. His requested six-month furlough lasted two years.

Crèvecoeur had assumed his consular post in New York City in November 1783, three years after he fled the American Revolution, abandoning his wife and two younger children. During the time between 1783 and June 1785, he was preoccupied with reuniting with his daughter and younger son—his wife had been killed during the war in an attack on Pine Hill, Crèvecoeur's farm in Orange County, New York—selling Pine Hill, and establishing secure commercial and cultural links between France and the new nation. Coupled with his poor health, he would not have had the luxury of undertaking the long, arduous journey to the Niagara isthmus during any of the months before July. As Allen and Asselineau put it succinctly, apart from two trips to Boston to see to the welfare of his children, "Crèvecoeur did little traveling during these two years in New York."¹³

That he did not travel to Niagara in July 1785 is confirmed by the archives of Fort Niagara, which show no record of a visit by Crèvecoeur anytime during the two years 1783–85.¹⁴ What the records do reveal, however, is that on the very days Crèvecoeur writes that he was exploring the Niagara peninsula, two young Englishmen had done so. Each, moreover, kept a journal of his travels, and one of these is clearly the hitherto-unrecognized source Crèvecoeur used in writing to his son.

Joseph Hadfield (1759–1851) and Robert Hunter Jr. (1764–1843) came separately to North America in 1785 to collect debts owed their fathers' respective business enterprises. Meeting in Montreal, learning that they were both headed for New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and finding they had much in common, they joined forces. The first leg of their journey was an arduous excursion up the St. Lawrence River, across Lake Ontario, to Niagara Falls. Each kept a diary he shared with the other. In the assessment of Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, Hunter's editors, "it is clear that they borrowed from one another, . . . but usually Hunter's is much fuller and more detailed. . . . Evidently when one or the other fell behind in his journal keeping, he brought his record up to date with material taken from his companion's notes." Wright and Tinling further observe that Hunter's interests were more varied and superficial than Hadfield's.¹⁵

Crèvecoeur lifted from Hadfield's diary (not published until 1933), almost word for word at times, his description of the Niagara isthmus.¹⁶ His letter to Ally is not, however, a simple plagiarism, for evidently he so artistically reshaped the original narrative that in 1818, five years after his death, Hadfield in turn was inspired to revise most of his earlier version, basing it on Crèvecoeur's redaction: the plagiarized diarist became himself a plagiarist.¹⁷ Clearly, the relationship between the two texts is teasingly complex and must

stand as one of the more unique examples of literary “incestuousness” within a genre—travel literature—already marked by plagiarism, fabrications, and outright lying.¹⁸ At least three important critical questions must be addressed at this point: When did Crèvecoeur, who sailed for France while Hadfield and Hunter were still partying in Montreal, obtain the former’s diary? Why did Crèvecoeur shamelessly pilfer the younger traveler’s account and then present it, even to his son, as his personal experience?¹⁹ And finally, when did Hadfield see Crèvecoeur’s letter to Ally?

Contrary to what one might reasonably infer, Crèvecoeur’s letter was not written soon after the experience it describes. Robert de Crèvecoeur refers to a 1789 manuscript describing a journey to Niagara Falls, dismissing the account’s July 1785 date as an error because Crèvecoeur had left New York in June.²⁰ Douglas S. Robertson points out that Hadfield returned to America a second time, in 1787, the same year Crèvecoeur resumed his diplomatic duties in New York City, following which Hadfield wrote a brief introduction to his earlier diary.²¹ This suggests that he had reason at that time to return to his journal, very possibly because someone had shown interest in it. That Hadfield, a Manchester merchant, would meet with France’s commercial representative for New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut is not unlikely—nor was Crèvecoeur’s interest in the Englishman’s North American travel account from which he might cull information for the work, the *Journey*, he was probably already compiling. Hadfield, moreover, revealed throughout his life a favorable disposition toward France. He had spent the winter of 1780 in Paris and actually lived with his family for a decade in France and Belgium from 1818 to 1828.²²

In the event, between 1787 and before he returned to France in 1790, Crèvecoeur certainly had opportunity to copy passages from Hadfield’s 1785 diary. Verbal duplications and echoings (of the English original), and a similar, overall narrative framework, clearly demonstrate Crèvecoeur’s plagiarism of at least the first two days of Hadfield’s record of his Niagara adventure. A few examples will suffice.

Structurally, the two narratives broadly record the same details in the same sequence: in each, the narrator arrives at Niagara Falls on July 11, attended by Robert Hunter. On the morning of the twelfth, they meet Mr. Hamilton who guides them first to the Landing Place on the Niagara River, then to Mr. Stedman’s house near Fort Schlosser. After a night’s rest and in the company of several other curious travelers, they proceed to the Falls, where they descend to the bottom of the gorge. At this point, Hadfield abruptly breaks

off his original diary entry in order to interpolate a new account, from the beginning, a retelling that more or less duplicates in language, event, and partial thematic emphasis the whole of Crèvecoeur's 1789 letter.

Comparing Crèvecoeur's letter with Hadfield's original version of the group's first descent into the gorge, one may readily recognize how translation and generic differences help produce such variations as exist between the two: expectedly, Hadfield's first version reflects the sprawling, episodic, somewhat rambling reporting of events and emotional reactions set down as they occur retrospectively to the writer; Crèvecoeur, on the other hand, tightly organizes the sequence of events, eliminating details and numerous characters not essential to the action—his is the product of an accomplished storyteller. His opening paragraph, moreover, provides exposition Hadfield does not need. Thus, Crèvecoeur sets the date, identifies his supposed traveling companion, and tersely alludes to the arduous and dangerous journey up the St. Lawrence River, a trip on which Hadfield had already expended numerous journal pages detailing events from June 23 to July 11: "It was in the month of July 1785, my friend Mr. Hunter and I arrived at the Fort of Niagara, after a long and painful voyage up the River of St. Laurence, the particulars of which being foreign to my present subject, I will therefore proceed to the immediate description of the wonderful Cataract of Niagara" (Crèvecoeur, 605).

The following day, July 12, Hadfield and Crèvecoeur (both accompanied by Hunter) respectively set off, guided by Mr. Hamilton, who brings the travelers to "the Landing" (Hadfield, 89) or the "landing place" (Crèvecoeur, 605), the first site at which goods could be loaded or off-loaded on the steep banks of the Niagara River ("the bateaux discharged," Hadfield; "the boats discharge," Crèvecoeur). At this point, Crèvecoeur omits Hadfield's long digressive description and historical exposition, picking up the latter's narrative with the party's arrival at Mr. Stedman's house. Both versions identify Philip Stedman as having "the Exclusive right of transporting the stores and merchandise from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie" (Crèvecoeur, 605). Here, Crèvecoeur again omits several paragraphs in Hadfield's account. Both writers then conclude July 12 similarly: "we retired to rest" (Hadfield, 96); "we retired to our rooms" (Crèvecoeur, 606).

Hadfield and Crèvecoeur begin July 13 with almost exactly the same phrasing: "We arose before the Sun" and then "began our walk to the river Erie" (Crèvecoeur, 606) or "proceeded towards the Falls" (Hadfield, 96). In each of the descriptions that follow, the writers focus on the Falls' cloud-like

“column of spray or vapor” (Crèvecoeur, 606) or “beautiful cloud . . . rising in the form of a column” (Hadfield, 96) and note the appearance of “three rainbows at once, one appearing under our feet on the surface of the water” (Hadfield, 96) or of “three [rainbows] which were visible at once. One as it were under our feet upon the surface of the basin below” (Crèvecoeur, 606). Next, using a cord (Hadfield) or rope (Crèvecoeur), the explorers descend—“after some fatigue” (Hadfield, 97) or with “the greatest bodily fatigue” (Crèvecoeur, 607)—and much danger (both) to the bottom of the gorge.

At this juncture Hadfield starts his narrative afresh. He interpolates what his editor, Robinson, terms “a reminiscence more detailed than the actual diary,” an insertion written “on March 26th 1818, he [Hadfield] states” (97). In effect, this “reminiscence” is, with some variation, essentially Crèvecoeur’s redaction of Hadfield’s *entire* original, as can be recognized immediately when Hadfield once more starts the narrative from the beginning using Crèvecoeur’s text almost word-for-word: “In the month of July, 1785, accompanied by my friend Mr. Hunter, I arrived at the Fort of Niagara after a tedious and fatiguing voyage” (97; compare with Crèvecoeur’s “It was in the month of July 1785, my friend Mr. Hunter and I arrived at the Fort of Niagara, after a long and painful voyage,” 605).

So closely does Hadfield reproduce Crèvecoeur’s actual sentences and literary reshaping throughout that his 1818 revision cannot be understood as anything other than a plagiarism. He even retains instances where Crèvecoeur, instead of recording the actual scenery, departs from the first part of Hadfield’s original by introducing geographic fabrications belonging to the literary history set down by earlier writers. On July 13, for example, immediately before he describes the three rainbows, Crèvecoeur writes of “the rays of the sun” gilding “the tops of the surrounding mountains” (606).²³ Hadfield’s earlier version rightly omits this geographic fabrication: “The sun’s rays as they were fixed on the spray, gave the most beautiful coloring that can possibly be imagined” (96). In fact, Hadfield had earlier stressed the landscape’s lack of mountains: “One continued plain on the East and West which extends as far as the eye can reach” (92). Although he does not introduce mountains in his later description of this scene with the three rainbows, he does insert Crèvecoeur’s generic mountains in a later passage, thus contradicting his original description of a flat landscape: beyond Fort Schlosser, he writes, “the mountains and forests ascend to a distance which can no longer be seen even with the aid of the telescope” (102–3). This closely follows Crèvecoeur’s description of the same scene when he writes that “the

back grounds at a great distance are terminated by a chain of high mountains, which lose themselves in the clouds and are bounded by the horizon" (609).²⁴

Whatever his other motives for inserting a new narrative closely following Crèvecoeur's, Hadfield must have been so impressed with the Frenchman's powerful, artistic reshaping of his own original rambling and digressive account that he largely substituted it for the canceled portion of his original narrative, even to the point of preserving Crèvecoeur's actual language and geographic "enhancements." He did, however, omit some material Crèvecoeur introduced, interpolations that may intimate something of Crèvecoeur's purpose in appropriating Hadfield's account.

One of these, relatively minor, involves Crèvecoeur's brief effort to bring Robert Hunter along. Of course, he had never met Hadfield's traveling companion. Thus his characterization of the young man as not physically up to meeting the Falls' challenge and who should therefore have remained at Fort Niagara was a curiously negative innovation.²⁵ Rightly, Hadfield, who knew and referred to his friend throughout the journal, deleted this gratuitous fabrication.

The second passage reflects Crèvecoeur's geographic and cartographic interests. He expands here on Hadfield's brief allusion to the great volume of water originating in the four Great Lakes to the west. Hadfield originally wrote: "The vast body of water discharged here cannot be computed, but we may form an idea from examining the size of those inland seas or lakes, and I have been so fortunate as to have their dimensions well ascertained by Commodore Betton" (102). Because Crèvecoeur's detailed exposition on the Great Lakes had little interest for Hadfield, he retained his earlier comment rather than incorporating Crèvecoeur's digression, which provides careful measurements of the length and breadth of all the Great Lakes, Ontario, as well as the four to the west. Crèvecoeur follows these data with another description of the vapor plume rising eighty feet from the foot of the Falls and producing on the west side, where Crèvecoeur stands observing the scene, no less than "four distinct rainbows" (609). At this point, the two narratives once more mesh.

The last, far more substantial, passage may help the reader appreciate why Crèvecoeur might have appropriated and reshaped a ready-made description of what he declares in his letter's opening paragraph as a geographic wonder, "which of its kind, is the greatest phenomenon in nature" (605). Inserted near the end of his narrative, this digression stands as a philosophic reflection on the importance and "meaning" not only of Niagara but also of all those natural

wonders that powerfully evoke the sublime. Situated climactically, the passage generalizes on all the concrete particulars Crèvecoeur has described in narrating his supposed exploration of the cataract. As such, it instructs Ally—and the reader—how to “read” the natural world or, more pointedly, how to employ the sublime to achieve an appreciation of the moral and transcendental truths toward which the phenomenal world points. Such a didactic, practical emphasis is consistent with Crèvecoeur’s epistolary efforts at this time to instruct, advise, educate, and inspire his children. (The earlier factual digression on the Great Lakes fulfills this educational purpose as well.) Additionally, correspondence dating from 1788 records that he was also deeply worried about Ally’s health.²⁶ The letter may therefore be understood as part of his effort to inspire Ally or to divert him from dwelling on his illness.

In a unique departure from the generally straightforward and factual narrative he had been presenting, Crèvecoeur now dramatically announces that his sudden emergence from the western bank’s Cave of the Winds—from the “awful,” dreary, opaque darkness between the Falls and the cliff from which they have just emerged into the world of sun, light, “pleasure and gaiety” (611)—inspires him to reflect on the experience’s profound meaning. Several times, Hadfield notes that he and his fellow explorers reached a similar point of “contemplating the surrounding objects, which we did in silent admiration” (95; also 99 and 102), but he never elaborates on the particular content of his or their meditations. Not so Crèvecoeur, who, now near journey’s end, discovers in “this cataract . . . one of the great efforts of a Providence, shewing the omnipotence of a supreme being, for it certainly is one of the most sublime and terrific objects in nature, at once impressing the mind with reverence and admiration” (611).

Crèvecoeur’s newfound valuation of his recent experience inspires him to generalize on the intimate connection between the natural and the supernatural, thus carrying the conventional eighteenth-century obsession with the Falls’ power to evoke wonder, curiosity, and terror to a new level of Romantic appreciation.²⁷ The whole of nature’s works, he continues, “are possessed with every requisite to gratify the senses, and our feelings are *harmonized into placid contemplation*” (emphasis added). On the practical side, nature teaches humanity “the most useful lessons of moral duties from every surrounding object”—both the “gradation of man from infancy . . . [to] the instability of human nature, and indicates the dissolution of time and the whole of the animated universe.” Continuing to generalize, he gradually returns to the concrete particulars of the scene, focusing next on the “never

ceasing shower” and “the rainbows [that] are ever visible where the God of day, bright Phoebus, makes his daily course and diffuses his genial rays” (611–12).

Crèvecoeur’s climactic, protracted transcendental meditation may be understood as the end toward which he reshapes Hadfield’s episodic, rambling narrative. As such, it reflects the general trend for how writing in the 1790s was gradually reshaping the Enlightenment’s fixation on a more traditional appreciation of the sublime’s power to evoke only fear, horror, and terror at the possibility of annihilation by the Abyss or absorption into the cosmic infinite.²⁸ In the seminal writings of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, the sublime and the beautiful are exclusive, separate experiences.²⁹ Crèvecoeur, however, offers a literary foretaste of the synthesis found in the nineteenth-century Luminists and other landscape artists such as Thomas Cole.

If the emphasis of Crèvecoeur’s letter to Ally may be viewed as consonant with the 1790s’ revision of the Enlightenment sublime, his 1801 record of his supposed 1789 exploration of Niagara, far more earthly and pragmatic, details how Loyalist settlers displaced by the Revolutionary War had successfully begun to tame Niagara’s wilderness. Although it continues to stress the sublime aspects of Niagara, it also emphatically details the progress of such men as “Mr. E.” in subduing wild nature and glances toward a future rich with promise of even greater commerce.

As noted, Robert de Crèvecoeur dates the writing of his ancestor’s epistolary account of the Niagara experience as 1789.³⁰ Revising Hadfield’s rambling journal record into a carefully crafted narrative that climaxes with a powerful transcendental epiphany may have inspired Crèvecoeur to elaborate and expand that experience in his last published work, the *Journey*. Historically, the *Journey*, which involves a different *dramatis personae*, is set sometime during the same year Crèvecoeur wrote his letter, while Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Hunter was commanding Fort Niagara before his posting to British Honduras in October of 1789.³¹

The *Journey*’s account differs from that in the letter in several significant respects. It is longer, running to fifty-four pages, followed by an epilogic, poorly integrated, twelve pages relating an episode that takes place one year later in 1790.³² Second, the *Journey*’s account offers more geographic details of the Niagara region. Third, the *Journey* appropriates the letter’s juxtaposing of the horrific sublime with the contemplative beautiful—Crèvecoeur’s significant addition to Hadfield’s original—and so amplifies, redefines, and expands

it so that this strategy of “contrast” (the word is Crèvecoeur’s) functions as a unifying theme for the eight-chapter narrative. For Hadfield, the relation of the sublime and the beautiful was a frustrating experience at which he only hinted, being beyond his ability to describe it—“what pen can describe the majesty and grandeur of the first coup d’oeuil of this tremendous cataract? . . . After indulging ourselves some time in contemplating the surrounding objects . . . *in silent admiration*, we returned . . . to Mr. Stedman’s” (Hadfield, 94–95; emphasis added). Crèvecoeur picks up the implied challenge and attempts to describe in words a sensation hitherto beyond the verbal reach of ordinary men and women.

While written at the threshold of the Romantic epoch, Crèvecoeur’s discovery of the transcendental resolution of his initial apocalyptic terror does not abruptly cease at this point. The dynamics of the sublime carry him beyond the solitary, isolated appreciation of the sublime’s power to effect a harmonization “into placid contemplation” of natural beauty—the “eternal or never ceasing shower, . . . the rainbows . . . ever visible where the God of day . . . makes his daily course.” They lead him ultimately to a final reintegration into a world where human beings have united to create, and enjoy, gardens or islands of civility between a natural world of “awful majesty and craggy appearance of the great and stupendous works . . . on both sides [of] the river,” and another “licentious world, where our sensibilities are alarmed with the sight of men preying upon men, and degrading the finest and noblest works of God-man, below the level of the brute creation” (611, 612).

Generalizing on the Niagara’s complex appeal, Elizabeth McKinsey argues that the dualism of its “inhabitable, improvable nature” and the “awesome, uncontrollable” nature was the “crucial part of the experience of Niagara’s sublimity in the early nineteenth century.” Her elaboration helps us appreciate the direction Crèvecoeur’s odyssey takes him in both the 1789 letter and, with important modifications, the *Journey*: “the beautiful and picturesque esthetics are essentially social in nature, based on human hospitality and interest.” The fear of Niagara’s destructive, terrible, power finds a precarious balance in the way imaginative, esthetic power envisions the “promise of [Niagara’s] fruitful industry and progress for human society.”³³

Edward S. Casey expands on McKinsey’s insight. He perceives in the “single flash of sublime epiphany” three stages or “moments” that must be understood as spatial as well as temporal. The initial stage or “the place of exposure” presents the viewer with the “Burkean sublime in an almost naked form . . . [which reveals] nature in its unbridled ‘power.’” The second stage is transitional. “The place of abyss” draws the viewer from the violence of the

first phase to experience *obscurity, vacuity, darkness, and silence*. It is a middle ground that leads downward, replacing the earlier danger of exposure with the danger of falling, which Kant perceived as the imagination's reaching "a point of excess" which is "like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself." Casey terms the final stage "the place of prosperity" where "danger has been eliminated." It is a space that stresses the good life, one filled with the "signs of prosperous farming . . . comfort and warmth." "Fear of exposure and fear of falling here give way to confidence in productive action . . . action [that] is essentially social, requiring the cooperation of many persons."³⁴

A final important difference between Crèvecoeur's two narratives involves their structure. The letter's plot is linear, tracing the progress of the explorers down the eastern shore to Mr. Stedman's, where they descend into the gorge. The following day, Captain Jones guides them to the western bank and, eventually, to Mr. Ellsworth's prosperous plantation. From there, they climb down into the gorge, undergo initiation into the suffocating darkness of the Cave of the Winds, after which Crèvecoeur experiences his transcendent vision of the beautiful and in due course is rewarded with reintegration into the pleasures of the social, civilized life.

The account in the *Journey*, on the other hand, is anything but linear. The author continuously postpones the journey's anticipated goal (descent of the two sides) with side trips, biographic expositions of characters, and diversionary narratives and lectures on features of the Falls delivered by other narrators. One can only speculate on Crèvecoeur's motives for what Robert Pogue Harrison has called a "digressionary style of narration."³⁵

In his valuable analysis of this aspect of the *Journey*, Thomas Philbrick notes that it results from "a simple and massive tripartite time scheme that centers on the highly developed societies of Europe, the nascent civilization of white America, and the primitive culture of the Indian. . . . The three phases take on the chronological sequence of future, present, and past." In this scheme "Europe . . . serves to supply an image of things to come: it represents a civilization in decline . . . [and] also . . . in the grip of revolution, brought to the edge of chaos by 'the most dangerous' of all manias, 'that of the perfection of Governments.'"³⁶ In what I think is an oversimplification by Philbrick, the Indian represents another danger: "the essential evil of an Indian existence is its violence: the inevitable bloodiness of hunting, the perpetual state of tribal warfare, the . . . addiction . . . to cannibalism." And while "America offers the chance for a return to a simpler and more stable order of life . . . the new republic exists in a precarious poise, threatened by the pull of new

ideas of revolutionary Europe and subjected to the retrogressive lure of the primitive wilderness.” But for Philbrick, this tripartite compilation of data is less important than the dreamlike quality it produces—“an illusion, a fantasy that has the oblique and disturbing import of dream.”³⁷

In addition to this important critical insight into the book’s structure, the *Journey*’s digressive style subtly underscores the impossibility of realizing in the long run one of the themes it explores but finds wanting—the Enlightenment’s celebration of the idea of progress. Where the Enlightenment tended to see Western history as, more or less, an inexorable, linear drive upward toward greater civilization and refinement, not unlike the flight of an arrow, the *Journey* suggests that history traces a far more labyrinthine course, through a forest marked by unexpected encounters, frustrating delays, veerings and diversions from the main path, and, in the end, what is in effect an aborted conclusion where the travelers are denied the long-expected, climactic, and culminating experience in the western side’s Cave of the Winds.

Later, I will examine the complexity with which Crèvecoeur traces this movement from raw, threatening nature to a landscape transformed by “productive labor” in the *Journey*. In his 1789 letter he seems to intuit that the first two stages lead to the third, without, however, readily finding the connection between them. Thus, he awkwardly, without transition from the moment of epiphany, returns to the plot line of Hadfield’s journal, recording observations of the curious “calcareous earth, which is called Surf stone,” and on the disturbing number “of snakes amongst the rocks.”³⁸ Momentarily, the letter founders, its sense of direction lost, only gradually effecting a transition to the enjoyment of the mundane and communal efforts representing the final phase of the dialectic Crèvecoeur is struggling to delineate. Thus, while Hadfield expands his description of the snakes, Crèvecoeur hurries on to note a party of Messagauga Indians “fishing at the mouth of the Basin.” The Indians provide him with opportunity for clumsily bridging into the world of productive social activity of which McKinsey and Casey write: *we* replaces the *I*—“*we* exchanged some friendly signs”—before the small group climbed “the winding path by which *we* descended, . . . [and] arrived upon the summit.” Having survived the terrors of the Abyss in the Cave of the Winds—“*we* found it opaque or dark . . . *we* might be said to be in a fuming bath” (611; emphasis added)—and having been rewarded with the summit and its, for Crèvecoeur, transcendent vision, the party is now greeted by “*our* friend Mr. Hambleton . . . [who] welcomed *us* back . . . [with] a homely but wholesome repast at Ellsworth’s house” (612; emphasis added).

The remainder of Crèvecoeur's letter continues to stress a new, social, and civilized world through which Crèvecoeur and his party now travel on their return to the comforts of Fort Niagara—"a fine cultivated country interspersed with good farms . . . Butlersburg . . . [with] several good buildings . . . and an appearance of civilization . . . and [finally] that hospitable garrison," commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell. This stark, jarring juxtaposition of raw, inchoate terror of Nature and the tamed, cultivated farms and nascent settlements becomes in the *Journey* one of the Niagara episode's unifying strategies, but with an important difference: for in the later narrative, Crèvecoeur repeatedly elaborates on a world where civility, industry, and a rationally predicated ethics have begun to transform Niagara's wildness in significant ways. Although the 1801 travelogue continues to exploit the 1789 letter's structural and thematic principle of contrast between two discordant worlds of experience, emphasis now shifts to a new consciousness of the greater hope to be found in mankind's cooperative efforts to create habitable, hospitable spaces within the menacing wilderness.

Possibly taking their cue from Dow's observation that the later Niagara "account is so highly embellished that it is in striking contrast with the simple and really trustworthy narrative contained in the [earlier] letter" (1:70), both Adams and Philbrick maintain that the *Journey* itself must in fact be appreciated as fictional.³⁹ Nowhere is Crèvecoeur's fictionalizing more evident than in the later map he provided to illustrate his exploration of the Niagara isthmus (see fig. 1).

It is a finer example of cartographic art—replete with ships decorating the north/south margins—than the hand-drawn chart accompanying the letter to Ally (see fig. 2), which probably served as the later map's source.⁴⁰ The map was drawn by Giraldon and engraved by P. F. Tardieu, who collaborated on a number of nineteenth-century maps. In a hand slightly distinct and larger at times, Crèvecoeur/Tardieu has inserted onto his French map several place names in English: *Landing Cr.*, *New Ark* (B), *Queen'stown* (D), *Indian Ladder* (N), and *Simcoe's Ladder* (also N), *Fresh Cr.*, *Eell Cr.*, *Island Cr.*, *Buffaloe Cr.*, and *Fish Cr.*, evidence perhaps of last-minute changes).⁴¹ Crèvecoeur's inclusion of Simcoe's Ladder, moreover, dates his map (if not necessarily the writing of the prose narrative), for that aid in descending the gorge was erected in 1795 for the convenience of the wife of the governor of Upper Canada, John Simcoe, six years after the Niagara exploration supposedly took place (in 1789, the year of Colonel Hunter's tenure as commandant). Notwithstanding stylistic

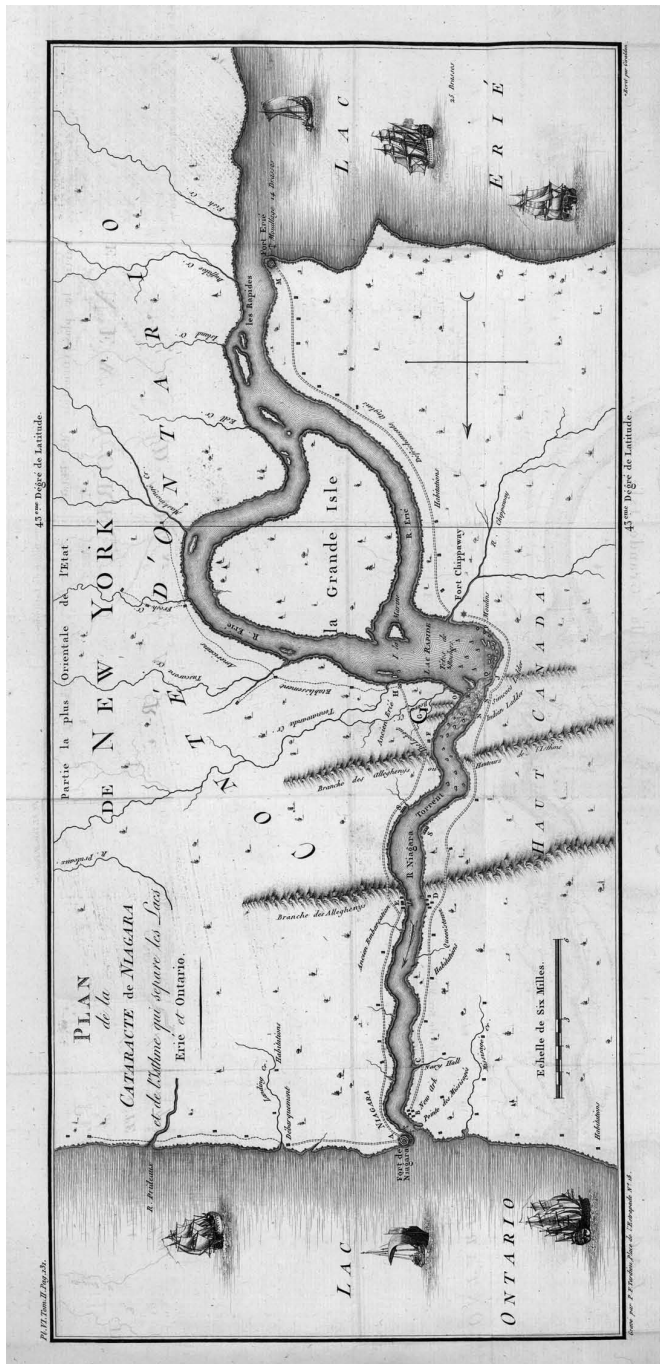


FIGURE 1: J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's map of the Niagara peninsula, c. 1795, published in *Voyage dans la haute Pensylvanie et dans l'état de New York* (1801), 2:131. Book used courtesy of Dickinson College. Letter G has been enlarged on this map.

differences, Crèvecoeur's two charts of the Niagara peninsula usually agree in their respective topographic features, even in representing several east-west ridges of mountains that, as noted above, do not exist.

The two maps, however, differ in at least one significant geographic detail: for whereas the chart Crèvecoeur drew for Ally accurately places the plantation of "Mr. Ellsworth" on the west shore of the Niagara river (letter K), the *Journey's* map fictionally moves that homestead to the eastern bank (letter G).⁴² Speaking to this discrepancy, Adams observes that "Mr. E., who occupies so much space in the [*Journey*] and who is said to be an opulent planter on the New York side of the Falls, turns out to be a Loyalist named Ellsworth, who really lived on the Canadian banks of the Niagara River" (xxvii).⁴³

Why Crèvecoeur would fictionalize the site on his later map is not altogether clear—what purpose could have been served by relocating Ellsworth to the New York side? One explanation might be found in the fact that in its present form, the *Journey's* narrative, unlike that in the letter, never in effect carries Crèvecoeur's party to the Canadian or western side.⁴⁴ The historical Mr. Ellsworth's outstanding agricultural and commercial accomplishments—he was one of the peninsula's largest landowners—evidently so impressed Crèvecoeur, however, that he needed to retain him, even though he also invented a new biography to support one of the *Journey's* implicit theses: namely, that certain kinds of enlightened Europeans seeking to create a new Eden would find that opportunity in the North American wilderness.⁴⁵

Francis Ellsworth was born in 1745 in Fishkill, New York.⁴⁶ During the Revolution, he served with Butler's Rangers, the famed Loyalist regiment based at Fort Niagara. According to Hadfield's editor, Douglas S. Robertson, after the war, Ellsworth "received a land grant bordering the Horseshoe Falls, . . . [the] famous Table Rock [M, on the Canadian side] being on his property." His name, Robertson continues, "is on the official list of 1783 as having 5 acres cleared" (101n). The historical Francis Ellsworth, however, brings with him associations and a past that Crèvecoeur ignores almost completely in the 1789 letter and thoroughly suppresses in the *Journey* when he moves him to the American side and abbreviates his name to the ambiguous "Mr. E." Ellsworth's birthplace of Fishkill was close to Crèvecoeur's own farm in Pine Hill. He was probably related to Verdine and Dorothy Ellsworth of Orange County, who in 1776 witnessed the (Protestant) baptism of Crèvecoeur's three children.⁴⁷ Crèvecoeur might thus have known Ellsworth from his years as an Orange County farmer, as he did with several of the

actors in the *Journey* (for example, Sheriff and Colonel Jesse Woodhull and the New York businessman William Seton).

More significantly, Ellsworth obtained his initial land grant at Niagara for his service in Butler's Rangers, an extremely effective Loyalist regiment commanded by Colonel John Butler (the founder of Niagara's Butlersburg). On July 3, 1778, Butler's Rangers—among them, Francis Ellsworth—and a group of 300 largely Iroquois auxiliaries destroyed the forts and settlements in Pennsylvania's prosperous Wyoming Valley (site of today's Wilkes-Barre), a "massacre" that through incremental narrative exaggeration in time came to epitomize for Americans the savagery of the British and Indian.⁴⁸

Crèvecoeur visited the Susquehanna Valley at least three times, in 1774, 1776, and 1778, gathering material for what became a major essay, "Susquehanna," in which he traces the rise and fall of the Wyoming settlement. His last visit coincided with the massacre. As he confided to Thomas Jefferson years later, he aided victims, with his wagons, in what became known as the "great runaway."⁴⁹ All this historical background Crèvecoeur suppressed when he reinvented and relocated the Loyalist Francis Ellsworth. The only fact he retained was Mr. Ellsworth/Mr. E. becoming the largest and most affluent landowner on the Niagara peninsula.

The *Journey's* Mr. E., far from representing the thousands of native-born American Loyalists driven into Canada after the Revolution is thus purged of his Loyalist history and associations with what, for Americans, had become evidence of Great Britain's perfidy and cruelty—the Wyoming massacre. He becomes a college-educated, widely traveled Englishman who escaped the degeneration of the Old World: "I was born in London; reaching the age of twenty, ten of which were spent at the University of Oxford, my father sent me to Russia" (2:285). Native-born Mr. Ellsworth thus becomes reincarnated as Mr. E., a European who migrated to the New World hoping to carve out in Niagara's promising wilderness a prosperous plantation, far removed from North America's eastern seaboard which was already revealing signs of decline and which ominously recalls the cultural entropy that has already taken place in Europe. Mr. E.'s plantation is a garden retreat wherein he can unite with other similarly enlightened seekers of a brave, new world. But it is a world besieged by ominous forces that will in time defeat it.

As noted above, Colonel Peter Hunter, commandant of Fort Niagara in 1789, cordially greets his two visitors, Kayo/Crèvecoeur and his traveling companion, Gustave Herman, a young explorer of German birth, whose

innocent, indeed naive, superficial, knowledge of North America the journey is intended to educate and deepen. Hunter immediately delivers the first of several descriptions of Niagara, hinting at, as in a prologue or overture, its essential paradoxical character: “in the midst of so many features, the first view of which provokes only an idea of chaos,” he stresses, “what harmony one observes in this grand and sublime aggregation! How effectively nature understands how to stamp its works with a majesty that summons both respect and admiration.”⁵⁰ Even before the two explorers enter the Niagara gorge, Hunter prepares them for its defining experience.

This power of the Falls to unite the sublime with the beautiful within a single continuum is a possibility that eludes the vision of all but the most sensitive visitors. Announcing what becomes a secondary but no less important motif, Colonel Hunter tacitly challenges the author: “Among the great number of strangers whom I have seen here, how few were in a position to articulate clearly the impressions that the contemplation of so many extraordinary sights awakened in them! Indeed, when curiosity is stripped of knowledge,” he says, alluding to Plato’s insight that inquisitiveness is the mother of philosophy, “memory recalls only imperfect images, doubtful or dark; only the main outlines remain distinct” (*Journey*, 259). These few—poets and artists—have an ethical duty to find words or pictures that will define the paradox by which isolated, silent terror becomes converted into communal efforts to tame the wilderness. The whole of Crèvecoeur’s eight chapters may be taken, in part, as just such an attempt.

Before they begin their Niagara adventure, Hunter advises the party first to meet with an old Indian, “neither hermit nor recluse, but a free, independent man.” Symbolic perhaps of the Native Americans who have left the warlike life behind them, this Chippeway has become “the Nestor of northern Canada,” a repository of the Native Americans’ collective wisdom gleaned from a lifetime of tragedy. Without explicitly defining what it is that the two travelers will learn from him, Hunter, like the classical guide and instructor Hermes, sends those to be initiated into the mysteries of Niagara first to the soothsayer, “old Agoueghan”: “If ever your friends request you to tell the story of your travels in these regions, the little excursion that I suggest to you would perhaps become a very interesting episode” (259, 260).

After telling him of his adoption by the Oneidas and offering him some wine and thus establishing a bond between them—which the Indian reciprocates (“Give me your hand, Kayo,” a gesture offered several times in

the chapter)—Crèvecoeur asks Agoueghan why he lives alone, why he has no one to keep his fire going, and who would help catch fish from the streams. Agoueghan tells his story. White men, bringers of disease and brandy, have decimated his people, leaving him the empty freedom of one who has nothing to lose—“what do I have to fear since I have lost every thing?” (265). Kayo/Crèvecoeur, though, sees in the old Indian’s life only victory. “We had come here to deplore your plight, to sympathize with your solitude,” he explains; “and here we are: congratulating you on the advantages of your situation, . . . on the happiness of being free and independent to the last day of your life” (269–70). Impressed by what he interprets as the Indian’s heroic Stoicism, he fails to perceive that his esteem has no real basis. Agoueghan is in fact losing his sight; he can barely carry the fish he has caught back to his cabin (“we helped him bring back the fish from his little streams,” 271); and he receives occasional handouts from Colonel Hunter (“I have contented myself from time to time with sending him bread, salt, and some bottles of old wine,” 260). He is blind to what the Chippeway knows—that he is alone: “when the last rays of my last sun have ceased to shine on my tree of life . . . who will cover with earth the sad remains and put them in the shelter beyond the reach of the teeth of wolves? No one! Just think! And I have had five fine sons” (5:270–71). Again and again, Agoueghan laments that the tribe that has given his life meaning and joy has perished and that he is alone. These are his last recorded words.

The narrator, however, ignores the burden of Agoueghan’s long lament. “How many days of journey we would have to make,” he exclaims, “before meeting a man like you, a Nishy-norbay who would tell us such interesting things!” “Interesting things”—he has missed completely the losses and the anguish of which the Indian spoke. Beguiled and blinded by a romantic dream of freedom and independence, the two explorers reveal in the end that they have not been listening to the old Indian’s story of loss. More than their dream of the nobility of freedom, Agoueghan values the community that once gave his life meaning. This, evidently, was the lesson Colonel Hunter intended to teach them. But they have missed. The next day, after drinking some wine and smoking “a long pipe of friendship and good memory, we shook hands with this great old man and started back with the soldier as guide” (271).

Apart from the specific message that the two failed to hear, the episode dramatizes a more general lesson. Early on in the Niagara exploration, the narrator intrudes a discordant note that subtly signals what evolves

into a chasm between what is said and what is heard—or not heard. Again and again, even while the way of life at Niagara offers optimal promise and evidence of efforts (often communal) to tame the wilderness, most of the characters are so locked into their own fantasies that such assurance can be interpreted in the end only as illusory, as fleeting as a dream. This ultimate failure to communicate is the worm that infests the garden. It will in time blight it and help transform it into the ecological wasteland it is today.⁵¹

Colonel Hunter next sends his guests off with a fishing party consisting of some of the fort's officers. As they return, they meet a group of young Mohawks and Cayugas who have also been fishing and are now entertaining themselves by telling stories. The first is a tale in which a young warrior proves through trials set before him that he is a fitting husband for the woman who has struck his heart. The second story is couched as a report on what the teller says he found in Hoppajewot, the Land of Dreams. It is a parable crafted for the party of white officers and their guests from the fort. The first part iterates a general warning given in many forms: "take care lest you destroy too much, because in the end you would have nothing" (276). The next section more narrowly stresses how the whites' bad behavior has ruined the goodwill extended them by the Indians and resulted in an unbridgeable chasm between the two nations. One of the reasons for this lies in the refusal of the whites to listen to what the Indians have to say. The whites have stubbornly rebuffed invitations to communicate with the Indians and not reciprocated with the same courtesies that have been extended to them.

The story tells how the whites, graciously welcomed by the mighty chief Okemaw and given a place to settle, set about despoiling the land, consuming more than they need, turning "the heads of our womenfolk," championing their God to the exclusion of the Indian divinities, and depriving "our witch doctors" of their influence. In time, they "will chase [the Indians] from here when they begin outnumbering" them (277). Alarmed, Okemaw summons the whites and Indians to a conference. According to the custom of Hoppajewot, the whites are "permitted to speak first." Each of their four speakers elaborates on an aspect of the Christian afterlife. When they finish, Okemaw invites the Indians' "beardless tricksters [to] rise and tell some of our stories," but the whites rudely refuse to listen: "'These are merely lies, imposters,' said the bearded speakers; 'we don't want to listen to them'" (278).

Okemaw then rehearses to the Europeans their brief history of scorning the Indians' traditions, "respectable by their very antiquity"; of desecrating the land; of driving the Indians from "your little mountain with the fire, the smoke and noise of death, we who have received you like a brother. . . . You have found peace and good will," he admonishes them, "and you have introduced us to strife and unrest" (278). In the end, Okemaw set fires to the area around the whites' settlement, burning everything. "Since that time, no one has ever heard of the bearded whites in the land of Hoppajewot. That is my story," the speaker concludes to the enthusiastic applause of, presumably, only the Indians. And when another storyteller was about to begin, "some officers, observing that we still had several miles to go before reaching Niagara, informed us it was time to leave" (279). Other than abruptly beating a swift and presumably embarrassed retreat, the soldiers show no sign that the tale has touched them in the least.

The burden of this tale is transparent enough. In the not-so-distant past, the bearded whites came to the land, were welcomed as brothers, treated their hosts with rudeness and disrespect, despoiled the land and its wild life, and, as a consequence and in a bit of wishful thinking—Hoppajewot is, after all, the Land of Dreams—were finally driven from their settlement. Over the years, little has changed, except that, in historical fact, the population of the whites has now increased so much that the land itself has been despoiled. "Why did you cut down the beautiful trees which covered the earth that I lent you?" Okemaw asks them at one point. "You are deserving of the Creator's indignation as well as ours, since, like us, these trees are the work of His hands" (278).

Against this dark background chapter 7 opens: "The day after this pleasure party, various persons with whom we had become acquainted at the garrison invited us to see their plantations situated on the east river whose land grant, they told us, had just been confirmed by the Government of New York" (280). In the Indians' story of the Land of Dreams, the whites were banished; in the reality of Crèvecoeur's narrative, they are firmly securing their claim to the land. The far-reaching prospects for such settlements, moreover, do not look hopeful. Overpopulation will consume the land; agriculture, unchecked, will result in an environmental crisis; the government will ratify the colonists' titles; and, inevitably, the Indians will be driven from the land or annihilated through wars.

The next dramatic variation on the theme of the failure to communicate comes in chapter 9. There, a storm keeps the travelers indoors. To pass the

time, Mr. E. reads them a description of the Falls in winter (it is not clear who wrote it, but the reader may infer that it was Mr. E.). Kayo/Crèvecoeur seems unmoved by the shimmering, descriptive details of Niagara in the winter—the “richness of the jewel-box, the sparkling lustre of light suspended from almost all the extremities of their branches [which produce] on the imagination a magic effect.” For eight paragraphs, the description testifies to how powerfully “imagination becomes creative, grows, rises, and soars in a wave of new objects that it decorates in its most brilliant colors.” Nearing the completion of his description, the narrator of the description finally introduces a theme which grabs Crèvecoeur’s attention: the contrast between Niagara in the winter and the drab landscape that surrounds it—“how this striking and magnificent scene is set off by the nudity of forests and the harshness of the season. . . . For the keener the cold, the more numerous are these crystallizations and these vast sheets of ice, resplendent above all when the sun floods them with its rays” (294, 295).

The fictional Crèvecoeur abruptly interrupts the description—“‘Since you speak of these contrasts,’ I told him,”—recovering a theme iterated throughout the Niagara section. The contrast involves the cultivated, garden-like islands that unexpectedly lie just beyond the Niagara gorge, and the scenes of raw violence where “everything coming from the lakes and abandoning itself to the Erie [River] is irresistibly dragged down and reduced to atoms in this vast abyss of destruction” (295). Even as the real author is actually succeeding in doing so, the book’s narrator contrapuntally claims that the poet and painter can never bring together in the same work “the two periods of existence: the contrast of birth and death” (295): Once again, personal obsession forces a disconnect between the subject being described and himself; untouched by the crystalline, glittering beauties of a frozen Niagara, he reveals he has been listening only until he can find the point to turn or refocus the subject to one he feels to be more esthetically and morally instructive.

In chapter 10, the travelers leave to see the Falls. As they make their way, Mr. E. recalls a conversation he had with the old Chippeway, Agoueghan, in which the emphasis again falls heavily on the losses and privations experienced by the Indian. Even more than in chapter 5, the tone is profoundly elegiac. “What has remained of these bloody combats, these destructive undertakings so long meditated and discussed around their council fires? Nothing! . . . What is this nothing, I have often wondered,” Agoueghan laments, sounding not a little like King Lear. “Could it be only the beginning and the end of life and of everything? And this dream of only a few moments only an interim

between these two nothings? This present of the mighty Manitou would not be worth the hardships and difficulties, the anguish, worries, and misfortunes that one experiences dreaming” (299).

Mr. E. assists the Chippeway in placing rocks on the tombs of his ancestors, after which Agoueghan leads him four miles to “one of the most beautiful fountains in this land.” The scene soon changes for Mr. E., who becomes acutely conscious, not of the beauty that had struck him earlier, but only of gloom and darkness, an almost suffocating atmosphere that blocks life-giving light: “Like the powers on earth, these trees had smothered their neighbors; one could see there neither shrubs nor bushes. In vain did I call forth nymphs from gloomy, desolate coppices and the water nymphs from this magnificent fountain; no noise could be heard other than the reverberation of the falls” (300).

Like Crèvecoeur during the reading of the description of the frozen Niagara shimmering in crystalline brilliance, Mr. E. disengages from the funereal beauty of the scene. In his fantasy he substitutes for it a landscape transformed by “work and industry . . . into prosperous countrysides rich in harvests.” At such a time, he continues, his dream of progress displacing Old Agoueghan’s long tale of loss and suffering of his people and of himself, “then perhaps will be born the troubadours who will sing of its poetry; then perhaps a new Petrarch will appear, whose loves and verse will make this fountain as celebrated as that of old Vaucluse, a name which I gave it in a report to a surveyor-general of Canada, as being the first European who had seen it and who might know something about it” (300). He has named it, ensured it has a place in the Western consciousness by identifying it with the Fountain of Vaucluse in the south of France, site of a popular tourist attraction in the heartland of the old, declining culture he had left behind for the New World. In this way, for Mr. E. the future of Niagara will in actuality become linked with ultimate failure of the European past that he had fled from. In his naive, material optimism for the present, Mr. E. is blind to what the future, the far-distant future, inevitably holds.

In chapter 11, the explorers finally begin their descent into the eastern side of the Niagara gorge. There is nothing in this description to distinguish it from the 1789 letter or any other of the eighteenth-century recitations of the emotional impact of the eastern side’s wonders. Disorientation, awe, terror at the threat of being dragged down into the abyss, and speechlessness—“how can one describe the impact which the prolonged contemplation of the perpetual motion of this eternal struggle leaves on the mind and on the senses, that of the continuity of a resounding as violent as utter chaos?” (303)—these

mark the experience. Eventually, fatigued by “watching, hearing, and admiring, even more tired from having tried futilely . . . to articulate our reactions,” they begin their climb, leaving behind “this deep, gloomy, and damp abyss.” Mr. E., instead of taking them back the way they had come or bringing them across the river to the western side, leads them to a simple cabin where, unexpectedly, “we found to our great astonishment, his wife, Mr. Stedman, Captains Goldworthy and Delancy . . . and Mr. de Beaubassin, a young man from Quebec who had come to see the falls” (304). The time for communal celebration has arrived. In fact, something rather different occurs.

In the 1789 letter’s account, the narrator experiences the full range of emotions set into play by Niagara as he explores both sides of the Falls. The experience of the eastern bank actually climaxes on the western shore. Overall, the general movement is toward and into the heart of Niagara’s mystery, the Cave of the Winds on the Canadian side. With its Burkean darkness, opacity, and suffocating air, the cavern initiates the travelers into a near-death experience, eventually driving them “out of this dreary place” into a world blessed with the “sun whose beams seem to shine with peculiar lustre, from the pleasure and gaiety it diffused over our trembling senses” (Crèvecoeur, 611). In turn, this leads first to the transcendent vision discussed above and finally, though without transition, into the experience of the beautiful which is, ultimately, “essentially social in nature, based on human hospitality and interest.”⁵²

Emphatically, the later account withholds this complete, intense moment of epiphany from the narrator, for he, in effect, is never allowed to leave the American side so that he may experience the initiation provided by the Cave of the Winds. Instead, what the 1789 letter claims is but a “preparative for that on the west side” (Crèvecoeur, 608) leads them, with far less descriptive power, to want “to return once again to the light of day pure and free from the mists by which we were surrounded, and to leave this deep, gloomy, and damp abyss.” Indeed, this eastern exploration alone must now provide “these precious moments, when one comes back as in *a re-birth to self-consciousness* after being overwhelmed and worn out by the impact of striking experiences and new ideas” (*Journey*, 304; emphasis added). Lacking the climactic, archetypal encounter with the Cave of the Winds, this experience is far less dramatic; it is in fact abortive.

Crèvecoeur does two things at this juncture. First, he postpones the transitional meditation that leads to the beautiful. Mrs. E. inquires of the explorers if they obtained the “compensation for the fatigues and dangers to

which you were exposed?" "Tell me," she asks, "did my husband guide you well? Are you satisfied with your journey? Were you disappointed in what you saw?" According to Mr. Herman, "I was too much moved, my eyes were lost in the variety, my imagination was bewildered by the extent and grandeur of the objects: everything is so awe-inspiring and so sublime, so imposing and so new that I feel the need to meditate on what I have seen and even see it again. . . . Perhaps after dinner I shall be able to reply with greater ease to your question" (305). As Kayo/Crèvecoeur stressed earlier, he needs opportunity to allay the turmoil and fear. He requires time to mediate on the experience.

And second, in place of the Canadian side's archetypal actual initiation, Crèvecoeur gives Mr. Stedman the task of describing, second-hand, the experience of exploring the western bank, without also detailing the transforming experience of the Cave of Winds. The western side still offers spectators a "tableau [that] is one of the most astonishing ever seen by man," one so powerful that "they would emerge only with the greatest effort from the almost supernatural ecstasy in which the contemplation of these great and magnificent objects had plunged them." But even here, Mr. Stedman takes his generic travelers to, but *not into*, the cavern: "one must pay dearly for this curiosity and this pleasure of being able to say that he has reached the Cave of the Winds" (307). Although he promises to show the explorers the western side the next day, the chapters in which he does so are "so spotted that the translator could not read four lines in succession" and has therefore omitted them (309n). In this way, the key experience—the near-death to which the narrator of the letter is brought in the Cave of the Winds—is withheld from Kayo/Crèvecoeur. Kayo/Crèvecoeur never, in effect, leaves the American side. Barely mentioned in Mr. Stedman's second-hand description, the cave loses the pivotal role it enjoyed in the letter.

The dinner, which one would expect to be stressed for its festive bringing together the now- (though only partially) initiated explorers and the inhabitant of Niagara, is mentioned in one sentence, after which the diners break into two distinct groups. All but Crèvecoeur, Mr. Herman, and Mr. E. "went trout fishing near the sawmill" (307). The anticipated full communal celebration deemphasized once more, Mr. Herman next introduces the final episode when he asks Mr. E., "since you own such a spacious and commodious house, why have you built a cabin on the banks of this stream?" (308). This opens the way for Mr. E., prosperous farmer and businessman, a man who delights in prophesying to his visitors the great commercial promise of Niagara's unique climate and fertility and location, to praise the merits of a

man who curiously has no speaking part in the story, but who complements Mr. E.'s realistic, pragmatic, futuristic interests, Captain Goldworthy, his brother-in-law.

The cabin is Captain Goldworthy's, Mr. E. replies to Mr. Herman's query, built in the midst of some 300 acres that he had sold him the previous year. Goldworthy is something of a dreamer, a man sensitive to the occulted lessons which nature has concealed, sympathetic to the "harmony whose modulations vary at the will of the wind and breeze; he says it is nature who speaks to us and invites us to meditate. . . . For him everything is an object of instructive observation." This aspect of nature offers an altogether new window into the sublime. Proximate to the majestic, apocalyptic violence of the Falls, he has found in the adjoining land a silence and a solitude "in the woods . . . charms for him that he often prefers to those of society or to dissipation" (308). This differs from the transcendental vision occasioned in the letter and in other places in the *Journey* where "the awful majesty and craggy appearance of the great and stupendous works which are on both sides of the river, form a kind of impenetrable barrier for many miles, except the winding path by which we descended seemingly made by the hand of nature to admit prying man into every one of its secrets." As we have seen, the letter to Ally connects "the most sublime and terrific objects in nature . . . with [feelings of] reverence and admiration" (Crèvecoeur, 611, 612). In the later account, Goldworthy looks, not to the abyss at the base of the Falls or to the Cave of the Winds for initiation into the beautiful, but to the less dramatic, less violent, less threatening, but still mysterious, processes by which the sublime may be converted into the mundanely beautiful:

these rocks . . . these everlasting witnesses of all times are indeed the most ancient things on earth; he examines their grain, as well as the mosses, the plants, and the cedars whose active roots dig deep into their crevices with a strength that seems inconceivable, often bursting the rocks with the very strength they derive from these rocks. For him everything is an object of instructive observation. (*Journey*, 308)

Earlier in the *Journey*, Mr. Herman had also discovered less dramatic revelations of sublime beauty in the shadows and darkened, obscured forms created by the fall of night. "How much more imposing it is in the midst of the calm and deep blue of this beautiful night, than during the dazzling

splendor of daylight,” he remarks of the great vapor plume rising from the Falls; “these mysterious shadows that envelop the island from the middle, lighted partially by this midnight moon, do you see how streaked they are by these bands, by turns luminous, transparent, or dark?” (292). He perceives in this play of shadows another, less obvious revelation of the awe to which we can gain access through contemplation: “For nature is sublime even in the combination of its shifting tints and modifications of its shadows.” Subtly, the sublime becomes sublimated by the beautiful. It loses its threatening power to a perceived imaginative transformation whereby the beautiful displaces the sublime without eliminating it.

Casey argues that the sublime may be understood as involving more than one “single kind of sublimity.” Beyond that in which “strength, violence pain, and terror . . . rush in upon the mind together,” which he terms the “apocalyptic sublime,” Casey finds in Burke’s chapter “Privation,” in Luminist painters (such as Fitz Hugh Lane), and in the works of the American landscape artist Thomas Cole clues and evidence for identifying a second kind of sublimity, the “contemplative.” Here, *solitude*, *silence*, *vacuity*, and *darkness* are the outstanding descriptive qualities—the “privations pertaining to the sublime.”⁵³

Tranquility, rather than power, defines the contemplative sublime. It is undramatic, unpretentious, and more “a matter of plumbing one’s own soul instead of plundering external nature.” But rather than being diametrically opposed, Casey continues, “the apocalyptic and the contemplative can be considered two aspects of the massive sublimity of nature itself. Or, more exactly: they are two ways of *representing* nature’s sublimity—a sublimity that ranges from the rugged to the reposeful, from the agitated to the tranquil, from the immense to the diminutive.” The contemplative sublime transforms the experience of the apocalyptic into the experience of the beautiful. “It seems evident that the idea of the contemplative sublime that characterizes Luminist painting—an art form that undeniably attempts to induce ‘restful contemplation’ in the mind of a viewer,” Casey argues, “is also a candidate for the *beautiful*, even though virtually every aesthetician . . . has insisted on a basic, irrecusable difference between the sublime and the beautiful.”⁵⁴

McKinsey and Casey discuss how painter Thomas Cole (1801–48) singled out Niagara Falls for the way it unified the apparently disparate experiences of the sublime and the beautiful in one continuum. “Niagara! that wonder of the world!” Cole wrote ecstatically,

where the sublime and beautiful are bound together in an indissoluble chain. In gazing on it we feel as though a great void had been filled in our minds—our conceptions expand—we become a part of what we behold! At our feet the floods of a thousand rivers are poured out—the contents of vast inland seas. In its volume we conceive immensity; in its course, everlasting duration; in its impetuosity, uncontrollable power. These are the elements of its sublimity. Its beauty is garlanded around in the varied hues of the water, in the spray that ascends the sky, and in that unrivalled bow which forms a complete cincture round the unresting floods.⁵⁵

Relatedly, for Casey, Cole so “blends” the sublime with the beautiful “that the beautiful can here be said to be a *subliming of the sublime itself*.” In an equally felicitous way of imaging this harmonization of the two experiences, Cole also speaks of “the sublime melting into the beautiful.”⁵⁶

McKinsey examines three paintings of the Falls executed by Cole.⁵⁷ She singles out his *A Distant View of the Falls of Niagara* (1830) for the way it harmonizes the sublime with the beautiful. Cole’s dialectic, she maintains, “signals recognition of the transitory nature of the sublime. . . . Utter astonishment cannot be prolonged indefinitely . . . , but must either collapse or be transcended by some kind of interpretation or abstract value, that is, sublimated.” For Cole, American scenery gives the view, McKinsey continues, of “a wilderness always coupled with extraordinary beauty,” to which Cole applies the term “the picturesque.”⁵⁸

Using McKinsey and Casey, we may trace Crèvecoeur’s complex response to the sublime to its British roots. But Crèvecoeur is a Frenchman, who in the 1780s and 1790s suddenly came into intimate contact with the great esthetic debate taking place in France and, more generally, the rest of the European continent. The eighteenth century witnessed a lively revival in the perennial controversy involving those who practiced a decorative form of studio-based landscape painting that sought to capture the “timeless ideals” of nature and others who increasingly advocated “naturalism,” that is, a more spontaneous art inspired by direct experience of the phenomenal world. Identified by the tag *genre pittoresque*, the latter school gradually displaced the older theory in vogue at the century’s beginning. Thus, by the mid-1700s, in the perception of Philip Conisbee, French landscape painting reveals “an increasingly precise, scientific and informational approach . . . in line with the more scientific outlook of the Enlightenment.”⁵⁹ Such landscapists as Claude-François

Desportes, Jean-Baptiste Oudry, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Hubert Robert championed an art that abandoned abstract theory and the studio for an *in situ*, “open-air,” a supposedly “realistic,” rendering of Nature. By century’s end, “Nature” prevailed over “Art.”

Claude-Joseph Vernet (whom Crèvecoeur identifies as a contemporary artist capable of capturing the essence of Niagara Falls) was a master at rendering light and atmosphere in order to record the essence, the reality, of a place.⁶⁰ He also introduced drama or dramatic elements into his landscapes in ways that would also have appealed to Crèvecoeur.⁶¹ In Vernet, the artists who insisted on the desirability of painting directly from nature triumphed. As Vernet advised students, “the only way they can rid themselves of [false principles and faulty reasoning] is by copying nature or observing it closely: only this can alert them to the errors to which they have been exposed in the studio.”⁶²

Even as he advocated his ideal of the middle ground between wilderness and civilization, so Crèvecoeur embraced a position between the older belief that an artist should strive to apprehend an idealized Nature (Nature as it could be) and the conviction that the artist must paint directly and “spontaneously” from Nature (Nature as it is). For this reason, Crèvecoeur, in the *Journey*, dramatizes Kayo/Crèvecoeur or some other traveler experiencing the sublime in all its defining terror and paralyzing astonishment only to flee to a place, usually the study, where the turmoil and the speechlessness brought on by near-immersion in the Abyss might be surmounted through contemplation.

Crèvecoeur repeatedly dramatizes this interconnection between the two contrasting experiences. For example, when Mr. Herman views the Falls from the vantage point of the Lookout near Mr. E.’s plantation, he immediately recoils from the sublime vista “which appeared so hideous and so repulsive . . . [and from] the force, the noise, the foaming whiteness of the currents which almost seem to swallow up its banks.” This yields to a consciousness of the safety from which he can regard all the horror of the cataract and the calming effect it has on his mind and soul: “one must content oneself with admiring the sublime efforts of nature in respectful silence of meditation and contemplation” (*Journey*, 281–82). Similarly, at a later point, in a passage already cited, Mr. Herman answers Mrs. E.’s questions, “did my husband guide you well? Are you satisfied with your journey?” by claiming his need to gather his thoughts and feelings into some kind of coherent appreciation of a scene too disturbing, too horrible, to permit immediate response. “I was

too much moved," he says, "my eyes were lost in the variety, my imagination was bewildered by the extent and grandeur of the objects: everything is so awe-inspiring and so sublime, so imposing and so new that I feel the need to meditate on what I have seen and even to see it again. . . . Perhaps after dinner I shall be able to reply with greater ease to your question" (305). Mr. Herman requires time and distance to come to terms with an experience which has plunged him into the tangled chaos of feelings.

Kayo/Crèvecoeur voices a similar reaction in a long passage that may be taken as Crèvecoeur's statement of his position on the controversy. "How can one describe the impact which the prolonged contemplation of the perpetual motion of this eternal struggle leaves on the mind and on the senses, that of the continuity of a resounding as violent as utter chaos?" he asks.

How can one analyze the impressions that result from the sight of these gigantic and threatening objects whose immensity is so disproportionate to the feebleness of our senses? *It is only in the quiet of one's study, and not in these places,* that it is possible to capture some notion; but even then one would need the brush of Vernet or Thompson or the pen of Rousseau. (303-4; emphasis added)

Crèvecoeur's stand on the esthetic debate is clear. Only at some remove from the terror and the horror and the bewilderment that define the impact of the sublime can the viewer begin to order, to make coherent, the turmoil that had so recently turned his world topsy-turvy. Neither in Nature nor distant from Nature, but only by means of a dialectic which moves seamlessly from the first to the second can one fully achieve any appreciation or record the natural sublime.

Returning to his narrative, Mr. E. suddenly veers off his description of Goldworthy to develop another important characteristic in his brother-in-law and to elaborate on his plans for the future. When Captain Goldworthy's regiment is recalled to Europe, Mr. E. continues, Captain Goldworthy "intends to resign his commission," and, "impressed with the pleasant ease, the independence enjoyed in the United States by a colonist who has the means to make the necessary investment to lodge himself, clear his land well, and convert the swamps into prairie lands," he has already hired four soldiers (bound by a five-year contract), "excellent workers: helped by my experience, my advice and my sawmill, his progress will be rapid." Mr. E. praises Goldworthy as a kindred spirit, one who, like himself, "is convinced that more remote from the source of

these revolutions and wars [in Europe], . . . living here under the most paternal Government in the land, . . . enjoying all the liberty that is compatible with a social state, the happiness of man is more assured here than elsewhere." The two have already laid plans to unite so that we "will increase our power as farmers and our happiness as relatives, neighbors and friends" (308–9).

As Mr. E. continues to elaborate his dream of transforming Niagara—"in a few years, the entire isthmus will be covered with rich dwellings and perhaps even Niagara will become a city!" (289)—the fishing party returns with "seventeen trout," effectively ending Mr. E.'s fantasy of progress and in effect bringing down the curtain on this expedition to the Niagara isthmus: "After spending an evening that was as pleasant as it was instructive, we separated with the intention of visiting the west branch the next day, and if the weather was not favorable, to go on to Niagara" (309). As we have seen, however, the two chapters describing that part of their exploration prove too illegible to transcribe.

The character of Captain Goldworthy challenges the reader with an interpretative difficulty: if he is so important, why is he not permitted to define himself through his own words or actions? Why must we rely on Mr. E.'s description of his character? He is the only important character appearing in the Niagara episodes whom we learn of by report alone. He never directly says a word or acts in the story of Niagara. Of the peripheral characters, Mr. Stedman, Captain Delany, even Mrs. E., all have some function in the plot. Only M. de Beaubassin, the student from Quebec, remains silently in the background. Yet Goldworthy hardly occupies the background, for he is the subject of Mr. E.'s long exposition, his final and climactic effort to define what is for him a kind of ideal, the man whose powerful imagination is balanced by his "industrious, frugal, and modest life." A relatively new, European, arrival at Niagara, recently married (we believe) to Mr. or Mrs. E.'s sister, possessing 300 acres and a cabin, Captain Goldworthy will unite his family to that of Mr. and Mrs. E.'s, to their mutual advantage. It may be, however, that Mr. E. has mixed fact with wishful thinking, has spun out yet one more fantasy.

There is some evidence for thinking that Mr. E.'s initial assessment of his brother-in-law is truthful so far as it goes—"He is very fond of fishing, natural history, and botany: his imagination, rich in riotous colors, paints charming perspectives" (308). All the many details that Mr. E. reports on in three long paragraphs that follow carry the ring of conviction. That he is not present, but has in fact gone fishing while "Mr. E was still talking to me of this wonderful plan," confirms that this Captain Goldworthy is as Mr. E. says.

When Mr. E. launches into detailing his plans for the future, however, we begin to suspect him of wishful thinking. For example, Captain Goldworthy's hiring "for a five-year period" no less than four soldiers to help clear and farm the land may suggest that the dreamer has laid plans to insure that he would still have time to dream (309). Note as well Mr. E.'s conviction that, "helped by *my experience, my advice* and *my sawmill*, his progress will be rapid" (emphasis added). Mr. E. will leave nothing to chance. Even more revealing of his uncertainty is his slipping from the particular pronoun *he* into using the more generic noun *colonist* and the conditional mood in his summary of Captain Goldworthy's promise: "Indeed, a prosperous colonist, free from boredom by steady occupations and creative works, need fear only the intemperance of the seasons and the outrages of nature and should find himself happy, *if* he is wise enough to prefer an industrious, frugal, and modest life, to futile dissipations, to the dangers of ambition and laziness" (309; emphasis added). In light of the first part of Mr. E.'s description of Goldworthy, one questions whether Goldworthy actually possesses this "wisdom" or determination to overcome what Mr. E. identifies as the "dangers of . . . laziness." After all, rather than join with his brother-in-law in singing praises of Niagara's bright future as a agricultural and commercial center to the visitors, he has silently slipped off with the others to go a-fishing.

Captain Goldworthy recalls the numerous silent figures that artists introduced into their paintings and engraving of the Falls (see fig. 3). Principally to stress by their minuscule presence the magnitude of the cataract, many of these figures also dramatize an array of reactions. Single individuals, couples, artists, and Indians variously illustrate the terror, the surprise, the awe, indeed, the indifference (several courting couples have turned their backs to the scene behind them) visitors feel. Others, however, remain inscrutable, undefined in their reactions. They are blank tablets, as it were, on to which one may project what he or she will. Such is the case with Captain Goldworthy. He may be all, or (as seems more probable) only partially as Mr. E. claims; or he may not resemble in any way the man he delineates. Captain Goldworthy is a teasing ambiguity.

By not permitting Captain Goldworthy to define himself, Crèvecoeur shifts emphasis to Mr. E.'s initial, and presumably correct, reading of his brother-in-law's character, and to his subtle determination to ignore or de-emphasize those qualities that initially seem to excite him in favor, perhaps, of a presumed ally who will aid him in taming Niagara's wilderness.



FIGURE 3: View of Niagara Falls by Bonfils, in *J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Voyage dans la Haute Pensylvanie et dans l'état de New York* (1801), 2:192. Note the European and the Indian in the foreground used to reinforce the sublime impact of the Falls. Book used courtesy of Dickinson College.

The Niagara chapters are situated at midpoint in the *Journey*. This is appropriate, for Niagara itself geographically occupies that middle ground between the East Coast, already showing evidence of decline, and the wild and uncultivated interior. It represents that ideal territory in Crèvecoeur between decadent civilization and the emerging frontier. It embraces that brief historical period where future promise has not yet been corroded by easy access and over-population access.⁶⁵ Throughout, however, anxiety ripples through the hopes of Niagara's pioneers. Although Mr. E. ignores the effects that overpopulation will have on Niagara's delicate balance, Mr. Stedman is acutely aware of this danger when he speculates on what life will be like a generation from the present time: "Let us bless the present order of things [because] . . . in twenty years more, the population of Upper Canada and the colonies, which the United States annually set up in bordering regions, will have cultivated these new regions as well as the banks of the Erie and the Ontario. Then . . . travelers will be able to visit and admire this famous

cataract, with as much ease as one goes today to Virginia in order to see Natural Bridge of Rock-Bridge County" (306). "*Let us bless the present order of things. . . .*"

The abbreviated, one-day, direct exposure to Niagara's power never allows Kayo/Crèvecoeur and Mr. Herman initiation into the cataract's mystery, the Cave of the Winds. The two chapters detailing that climactic and defining adventure, the translator explains, have been rendered illegible by the shipwreck. In terms of its impact on the narrative, it never occurred. As Mr. Herman reminds Mrs. E., he anticipates a transitional stage leading from the apocalyptic sublime to the contemplative, which will conclude his experience. We know only that the east-side experience leads to fleeting moments of social interaction and communal enjoyment—lectures on Niagara's future by Messers. Stedman and E., a brief dinner; a second-hand report by the one man (Mr. Stedman) who might have instructed them further on Niagara's mysteries. Communication, while it does momentarily bring disparate elements together, ultimately fails. People are too absorbed by their own obsessions to bridge the gaps separating one from another.

This thematic breakdown in communication may illuminate why the Niagara chapters lack continuous, linear structure. More properly, the disjointed parts are to be understood as creating a kind of a composite, a verbal mosaic, which makes ultimate sense when viewed through the combined eyes of all the several observers and narrators.⁶⁴ The discontinuities and episodic arrangement of chapters—and this applies to the whole of the *Journey* as well—acquire full meaning only when taken as a collection of subjective responses to essentially the same experience—Niagara. The fragment, the vignette, the tableau, the chapters or episodes that begin and end abruptly, form a disjointed composite of sundry responses to the beautiful and the sublime.⁶⁵ Implying a Kantean (subjective and Continental), rather than a Burkean (objective and British), revelation of the sublime, we can begin to see here yet another probable, important, formative influence coming from the French eighteenth-century esthetic tradition—Louis Carmontelle's "landscape transparencies."

Carmontelle was a pupil of Phillippe-Jacques de Loucherbourg, a landscape painter who also achieved fame as a designer of stage scenery for David Garrick. Loucherbourg relied on vivid backlighting of isolated scenes painted on "transparent" fabric or gauze (often reinforced with sound effects such as thunder and water rushing over sand on the beach). Loucherbourg's scenes became so popular that, beginning in the 1780s, he adapted his landscapes

to a portable mini-stage, or Eidophusikon, eight feet deep by six feet wide, which exploited the full resources of landscapes painted on glass or transparent fabric and lit from the back with oil lamps. These landscapes Loutherbouurg presented to his small audiences (of about 130 viewers) to capture the changing light of the days or seasons—a series of tableaux would illustrate, for example, London at dawn, the bay of Tangiers at midday, the bay of Naples at night. Laurence Chatel de Brancion writes that “the Eidophusikon worked like an improved slide projector: first, three-dimensional views, then glass slides animated by manipulating a light source from behind.”⁶⁶

Influenced by Japanese *emakimono*, or scrolls that retold stories of animals or people or depicted continuous landscapes up to 66 feet long as the scrolls were unrolled, one scene at a time, Carmontelle adapted the technique to creating dynamically moving, “cinematic” landscapes (rather than isolated, static tableaux) to a scaled down version of Loutherbouurg’s mini-theater. “So that the objects on that strip of paper could be shown in sequence,” Carmontelle explained,

it is mounted on two wooden rollers, enclosed in a black box and placed at either end. The box has two openings, approximately 26 inches each, where two doors can be lifted to allow daylight to pass through the painted paper. A handle is fitted to the axis of one of the rollers to turn the roller on which the entire strip of paper is wound, transferring it to the other roller, which also turns, showing in sequence all of the objects painted on the paper.⁶⁷

The landscape, moreover, was viewed in a darkened room, and “to reinforce the effect of surprise, the first few sheets of paper were painted black. . . . [Abruptly] the viewer entered into the fiction and then was caught up in the narrative,” de Brancion explains.⁶⁸

Not mere eighteenth-century curiosities, Loutherbouurg’s vignettes and Carmontelle’s little theater spoke, in the 1780s and 1790s, to the Enlightenment’s hunger for accurate knowledge of the expanding world that was dramatically revealing itself. Employing a precursor of cinematic technology, the two artists presented exotic landscapes “which fulfilled people’s dreams of great voyages. The people of the Enlightenment admired explorers, who extended the limits of the known world and thus of knowledge.”⁶⁹ Crèvecoeur, explorer, surveyor, indeed, cartographer, wrote for such an audience, and he did so in a literary medium that was in effect the verbal counterpart of Carmontelle’s Eidophusikon.

Crèvecoeur's reliance on the eighteenth-century literary convention of the sea-damaged manuscript—an appropriation that has irritated some commentators⁷⁰—may be appreciated also as a strategy for translating Carmontelle's "landscape transparencies" to his verbal medium. Philbrick sheds considerable light on how the abrupt, eerie, dream-like, fantastic quality, and the shifting, circling in time often contribute to what he characterizes as the work's "inward and metaphoric impetus."⁷¹ But beyond this, I suggest, many of the same qualities Philbrick singles out derive from Crèvecoeur's efforts to capture in prose the impact that Carmontelle sought to create with his short "landscape transparencies." This becomes vividly clear, for example, in the opening chapter of the *Journey*, which reads more than a bit like the *in medias res* beginning of an epic poem: "What a vast subject for speculation the old and new inhabitants of North America offer!" continued Colonel Crawghan" (*Journey*, 9). Although Crèvecoeur's notes try to explain the missing "first and last pages of this chapter," the impact of famed and half-mythical Indian agent Colonel George Croghan (who sympathized and lived with the Indians while always scheming to make money, buying their lands, and trading with them) rising from the near-oblivion of half-forgotten history is jarringly abrupt, like the black trailer suddenly giving way to the brilliantly lighted scene that initiates one of Carmontelle's landscapes. Chapter 1 ends with a similar, though not perhaps so dramatic, abruptness, followed by a note explaining the suddenness of the chapter's conclusion: ("There appears to be a considerable portion missing here") (19). "Blackness" again.

Chapter 2 then starts two years later with the narrator's joining "the venerable Franklin . . . on a trip to Lancaster . . . to lay the cornerstone of . . . [Franklin and Marshall] College" (20). Sometimes brief (like the example of chapter 1), sometimes long (like the eight chapters—or nine if we count chapter 12, which takes place a year later—which present various perspectives of Niagara Falls and the Niagara peninsula), the *Journey* moves through multiple narrative sequences offering sketches, tableaux, and episodes leaping over gaps of time or circling back to earlier memories. Indeed, the metaphor of the "mosaic" is a useful tool for appreciating the book's discontinuous structure.

In this way, vignette by vignette, sketch by sketch, circling back and forth in time, the long and short sections (the "landscapes") of the *Journey* succeed in documenting the land and the people of Pennsylvania's and New York's middle ground during the years 1785 to 1800. Working in Paris during the same time, Carmontelle also sought to document pictorially the mindless

though beautiful life that brought down the Old Regime in the flames of revolution and the existence that evolved out of the ashes after the Reign of Terror. De Brancion aptly captures this intent when he writes that Carmontelle

wanted to show and, especially, to preserve for posterity, the daily life of the French at the end of the eighteenth century. . . . He was making a documentary. The subject was a familiar one to all European artists, who generally handled it realistically in the North, . . . ; there was usually one tableau to represent each season. The theme was also treated by Japanese artists in their emakimonos, in a series of related scenes suggesting the passage of time.⁷²

By means of these short, cinematic “landscape transparencies,” Carmontelle created a mosaic of Parisian life during the 1790s and into the 1800s. With North America, particularly Pennsylvania and New York, as his subject, I argue that Crèvecoeur, too, participated in this ambitious artistic adventure and in ways paralleled Carmontelle’s cinematic landscapes, which insisted that the viewer see it from many subjective perspectives and thus become “a spectator in the world.”⁷³

The full implications of the interlude at Niagara become apparent in the last chapter of the *Journey*. There, Mr. G., fourth-generation Dutchman on a plantation dating back to 1690 when his great-grandfather purchased it from “the last Indians of the village of Aquankanunck” on the bank on the Passaic river near Newark, New Jersey (564), confronts the probability of his son’s leaving the plantation to join other youths who have abandoned their paternal legacies for the western frontier. Mr. G. stands at the end of events set into motion a century earlier when Dutch New Jersey was still wilderness, even as Captain Goldworthy and his new wife are about to initiate a colonizing adventure on the Niagara frontier.⁷⁴ They are the omega and the alpha, respectively, of a perennial cycle.

In order to augment its value and thereby make the land more attractive to his son, Mr. G. has “imported from Europe a great number of fruit trees of the very finest and rarest species in that land” (564). And in a passage that glances back to the childless Agoueghan—who wonders, “who will cover with earth [my] sad remains and put them in the shelter beyond the reach of the teeth of wolves” (270–71) and who in a later chapter, with Mr. E., placed “rocks on [the] old tombs” of “so many generations of Chippeways” (300 and

298)—Mr. G. has erected “a small sepulchral vault” at “some distance from” his home to house the bones of his ancestors and, at a later day, himself. His intent in so doing is to make it harder for his son to sell the land: it “will cause him to consider such [leaving] as shameful and sacrilegious” (565–66). In his own way, Mr. G. is like old Agoueghan: both are the last of their races, meditating on the oblivion that awaits them

One feels in Mr. G.’s actions a quiet desperation. His son is hardly more than a spectral presence within the chapter, a ghostly character far less realized than Mr. G.’s Dutch gardener, whose vital presence in Mr. G.’s life has proved decisive and lasting: “This man is a practical philosopher in everything concerning the vegetation and conduct of his garden” (565). It was from him that Mr. G. came fully to appreciate his garden—“he gave me lessons in botany. Could I ever tell you about the astonishment, the respect, and the admiration that these wonders of nature filled me with!” (565). *Astonishment, respect, admiration*—with these words, Crèvecoeur signals the presence of the sublime; they are key terms long used to register its effects upon the viewing subject.⁷⁵ This episode, moreover, recovers an insight Crèvecoeur had introduced with his description of Mr. Herman’s reactions to the nighttime shadows playing over Niagara and in Mr. E.’s passing comments on Captain Goldworthy’s discovery of the sublime within the quieter landscape away from the Falls. On a more mundane level, the sublime may be appreciated in one’s own garden—“that fine vegetation by which I am surrounded; and the development of so many seeds! What an inexhaustible source of *astonishment* and *admiration*” (568; emphasis added). One need not stand on the edge of the Abyss, paralyzed and speechless with amazement, to appreciate the sublime.

Indeed, Mr. Herman’s, Captain Goldworthy’s, and Mr. G.’s contemplation of nature take the same general direction. Mr. E. reports of Goldworthy that

for him *everything* is an object of instructive observation; the gnat that pursues the swallow, . . . this phoenix among insects, which, in order to give life to its young ones, brings speedy death to itself; . . . the passage of the leaves and debris that they drag down, the fluttering, ephemeral groups whose existence lasts only from dawn til dusk, . . . all these objects are for him a fertile source of dreams and thoughts” (308–9; emphasis added)

Captain Goldworthy shares this meditation on Time and Change with Mr. G.: “that eternal circle of vicissitudes; now of order, now of peace and good

fortune; . . . on that swift circle from birth till death, annihilation, and reproduction” (567), the latter says.

In a rapturous, imaginative flight, Mr. G. rings in the questions that gradually rise to the central, perennial question of all:

What was the past like, I have often asked myself. . . ? And this future which is nothing before arriving, and which leaves us the very moment it arrives; toward which, however, our imagination transports us at every moment that we may pin on it our tiniest hopes? And the present—fleeting, like the wind that blows, and which we scarcely enjoy, before it is gone? (567)

Concluding, he asks the definitive, ultimate question: “Placed between these different points which surround and escape him relentlessly, what is man?”⁷⁶

With this question, Mr. G. checks his imaginative flight—“I stop and come down to earth, so to speak.” My soul, he says, adjusting to what others mistake as the blandly everyday, “seems to hear under these refreshing shades [of the primordial cedar trees] an ethereal concert whose sounds appear to be near or distant, to be born, to grow, or to die, according to the strength of the sea breeze which passes with some force through the leaves of these trees.” Mr. G. discovers the missing cord which harmonizes the contrast between the sublime and the beautiful. Variousy reminding him of the music sounded by a harp, a flute, or a bassoon, “I find nothing so enticing as this blending of sounds, sometimes vague, uncertain, and almost always harmonious” (568).

Here in this final chapter the author brings his themes to surface; he does not bury them beneath another’s second-hand report or relegate them to the background to allow someone else opportunity to expand upon, say, his dream of mutual effort to transform the peninsula into a happy, capitalistic utopia. Mr. G., like Captain Goldworthy and Mr. Herman, is one of those special individuals who can feel and see—he is a “seer,” one who “sees”—who can see in what so many ignore or take for granted: *astonishment*, *amazement*, *wonder*, and *admiration*. “What an inexhaustible source of astonishment and admiration!” (568), he exclaims of the moon, the melting polar ice, and the profusion of his garden’s vegetation with its many seeds.

The time spent at Mr. G.’s, the narrator says, bringing to an end the *Journey*, was an Epicurean idyll, a moment of time, out of time, yet focused nonetheless on time,⁷⁷ in a garden whose beginning is imperfectly envisioned at Niagara and whose future end is foreseeable with the almost certain departure for the West of Mr. G.’s son. Such moments, shared moments, are priceless,

beyond reckoning—"Divided between the pleasures of fishing, walking, and conversation, [the time] elapsed like enchanted days, that is to say, with the speed of lightning" (568–69). Mr. G., Mr. Herman, Crèvecoeur—and presumably Mr. G.'s gardener—unite in a single consciousness the pleasure to be enjoyed in this briefest of moments. Brief as a lightning's flash, moments like this may nonetheless achieve the immortality offered by such artists as Crèvecoeur—or Gustave Herman, who has newly uncovered within himself artistic sensitivity and skill. For to commemorate this moment, Mr. G. transcribed on a rock a poem Mr. Herman had etched onto one of the window panes, which he then placed in his garden:

It is here . . . that a true sage
 Enlightened my mind, inspired my heart.
 Haven of virtues home of hospitality
 Orchards where nature unfolds her bounty
 Majestic trees, rich river . . .
 . . . How many times, from the bosom of my country
 My thoughts will blend with yours. (568)

After this, the two travelers part, take their leave of Mr. G.'s garden world, Mr. Herman for New Haven ("New Heaven") and Kayo/Crèvecoeur for Pennsylvania's middle ground, "to return among my friends at Shippenbourg" (569).⁷⁸ Crèvecoeur tells the reader that Carlisle is "but seventeen miles" from "Shippenbourg" (*Journey*, 24).

NOTES

1. This fear of Niagara's destructive power was not without foundation. See Patrick McGreevy, "Death at Niagara," *Imagining Niagara: The Meaning and Making of Niagara Falls* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 41–70.
2. Charles Mason Dow, *Anthology and Bibliography of Niagara Falls*, 2 vols. (Albany: State of New York, 1921); "Industrial Niagara" (2:929–1056), traces the record down to 1916. Elizabeth McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pt. 5: "The Icon Shattered" (249–82), offers a far-reaching discussion on how "Niagara's sublimity gave way before that of bridges and power stations" (281). More than any other work, Ginger Strand, *Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power, and Lies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008) details how the American side has become a landscape of power grids and power lines, landfills, and dumps (many of them for nuclear waste). She points out how the Niagara River Control Center can regulate the flow of water, reduce it to a trickle when "necessary," and how in 1969 the U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers actually “shut off” the water altogether in order to “repair” the tourist attraction (see especially 164–71, 177–78, and 193).

3. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Voyage dans la haute Pensylvanie et dans l'état de New York*, 3 vols. (Paris: Maradan, 1801); translated (without the original's maps and illustrations), by Clarissa S. Bostelmann as *Journey into Northern Pennsylvania and the State of New York* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964).
4. From Crèvecoeur's own great-grandson, Robert de Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de Crèvecoeur: sa vie et ses ouvrages . . .* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1883), down to Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur: The Life of an American Farmer* (New York: Viking, 1987), commentators have tended to view the *Journey* as a truthful compilation of Crèvecoeur's many trips throughout Pennsylvania and New York, augmented with “borrowings” from other writers, such as Jonathan Carver, Thomas Jefferson, William Bartram, and Gilbert Imlay.

Two critics, however, have taken the deeper look, as it were. For Percy G. Adams, who dedicated over thirteen years to decoding Crèvecoeur's literary games, Crèvecoeur wrote within the tradition of fictional eighteenth-century travel literature. See his “Crèvecoeur and Franklin,” *Pennsylvania History* 14 (1947): 273–79; “The Historical Value of Crèvecoeur's *Voyage*,” *American Literature* 20 (1948): 150–68; “Notes on Crèvecoeur,” *American Literature* 20 (1948): 327–33; Crèvecoeur—Realist or Romanticist?,” *French American Review* 2 (1949): 115–35; and the “Introduction” to his translations in *Eighteenth-century Travels in Pennsylvania and New York* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961).

More recently, Thomas Philbrick produced one of the most penetrating readings of the *Journey*, essentially agreeing with Adams's assessment, although he stresses the need to appreciate it as a “dream-journey,” the fantasy of which often “disturbs” by reason of the way dream displaces reality (*St. John de Crèvecoeur* [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970], 144–60).

5. Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 29–31.
6. “Description of the Falls of Niagara, 1785,” *Magazine of American History* 2 (1878): 605–13.
7. *Description de la Louisiane, nouvellement découverte au Sud 'Oüest de la Nouvelle France . . .* (Paris, 1683).
8. Dow, *Anthology and Bibliography of Niagara Falls*, 1:62–63. Kalm's letter first appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 20, 1750, and was reprinted in John Bartram's *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, River, Productions, Animals, and Other Matters . . .* (London, 1751), 78–94, and in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 21 (1751): 15–19.
9. In another version of the same trip, his letter to his friend Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, Kalm writes a far more typical, less inhibited account: “A Description of the Waterfall in North America,” in *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770*, rev. from the original Swedish and ed. Adolph Benson, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1937), 2:693–709. The differences between the two letters, especially on the subject of the sublime, will be the subject of a later essay by this author.
10. Frank H. Severance, *Studies of the Niagara Frontier* (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1911), 348.
11. See Julia Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 25–26; and Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 127 and 130.
12. Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 122–23.
13. *Ibid.*, 127.

14. I wish to thank Robert Emerson, director of Fort Niagara, for taking time he did not have to help me search the fort's archives and for showing me the important sites of eighteenth-century Niagara.
15. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tining, eds., *Quebec to Carolina in 1785–1786, Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1943), 10.
16. Commentators have long recognized, of course, that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel writers commonly “borrowed” and plagiarized from one another. For a general discussion of Crèvecoeur’s plagiarism, see Adams, “Notes on Crèvecoeur,” 327–33. In his “Introduction” to *Eighteenth-Century Travels*, Adams discusses what he terms the “peculiar plagiarisms in the *Voyage*,” xxxv–xli. Clarissa Bostelmann also writes that “Crèvecoeur often politely ‘lifted’ from whatever travel and descriptive literature that struck his fancy: Jefferson, Bartram, Chastellux, Imlay, *et al.*, to cite a few” (Crèvecoeur, *Journey into Northern Pennsylvania*, x).
17. Crèvecoeur died November 12, 1813.
18. This subject is covered well in Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962). See also Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).
19. Nowhere is the critical problem of Crèvecoeur and his literary personae more evident than here. It also comes to the foreground in the literary games Crèvecoeur plays when he describes the genesis of the *Journey* as a water-damaged manuscript salvaged from a shipwreck, written in English by a person identified only as one who had been adopted into the Oneida nation (with the name of Kayo), and in turn translated into French and heavily annotated by the translator.
20. Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de Crèvecoeur*, 115 n. 1.
21. Douglas S. Robertson, ed., *An Englishman in America, 1785, Being the Diary of Joseph Hadfield* (Toronto: Hunter-Rose Co., 1933), vii. Indeed, Crèvecoeur and Hadfield might have met on board the ship that carried Crèvecoeur back to New York, the *Courier de l'Europe*, for which newspapers reported only a partial list of the better-known passengers, such as John Paul Jones, the Marquis de Labinière and J. P. Morris of Philadelphia (Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 262–63).
22. “Notes on the Relationships between the Families of Worsley, Tollemache, and Hadfield in the Isle of Wight,” retrieved from Champion: Isle of White Enthusiast website, <http://www.iwhistory.com>.
23. Frank Severance says of Crèvecoeur’s “surrounding mountains” that it is “singular. Early travelers called the Lewiston Heights ‘mountains,’ but it was an oddly perverse memory which made mountains visible at the Falls” (*Studies of the Niagara Frontier*, 349). Discussing the occurrence of mountains in early descriptions of the Falls, Elizabeth McKinsey observes of Hennepin’s 1698 description and engraving in his *New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, depicting “the broad sea and mountains in the background,” that Hennepin errs, for “there are no mountains within the conceivable visible range of Niagara Falls. . . . Why then the mountains?” McKinsey answers by recalling Kenneth Clark’s remarks on sixteenth-century Mannerist landscape composition, “whose conventions . . . [define] as a ‘high point of view, [a] distant prospect of mountains and hills,’” concluding that “Hennepin’s experience at the Falls” was formed by “expectations and preconceptions . . . that shaped what he ‘saw’ at Niagara” (*Niagara Falls*, 13).
24. See the maps (figs. 1 and 2) Crèvecoeur included with his two descriptions, depicting several chains of mountains crossing the Niagara River.

25. Of the party's arduous exploration of the area at the foot of the Falls, Crèvecoeur writes: "My friend Hunter was entirely spent; I repented his coming, for fear of some accident, and indeed had endeavored to dissuade him from this perilous excursion, but he could not bear being left behind" (611).
26. Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 275; Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 148, 157, and 161.
27. Although the cataract indeed occasionally inspired Hadfield to reflect on his mortality—"there was something terrific in the rocks which hung and projected over us," 104—his journal tends to emphasize instead another traditional response to the sublime, its ineffability: "it is impossible to describe the impression [the cataract] made on my senses. For some minutes I remained in silent admiration and astonishment, and no longer can convey an idea of the grandeur and sublimity of the scenes before me" (98; see also 94, 95, and 99). Throughout his narrative, on the other hand, Hunter consistently stresses more the fear, terror, awe, and horror inspired by the Falls. He observes, for example, that "we might safely say that we were on the brink of eternity. People who are tired of this life, instead of shooting themselves, should go to the falls of Niagara" (100; see also 102, 103, 105, and 106). Louis Hennepin initiated this obsession with the Falls' awe-ful terror: "when one stands near the Fall, and looks down into this most dreadful Gulph, one is seized with Horror, and the Head turns round, so that one cannot look long or steadfastly upon it" (in Dow, *Anthology and Bibliography of Niagara Falls*, 1:29).
28. McKinsey traces this didactic and esthetic shift in her chapter "'Thought from its magic prison breaks at last': The Meaning of the Cataract's Sublimity," in *Niagara Falls*, 86–125.
29. Although Burke and Kant agree in distinguishing between the sublime and the beautiful, each does so for different reasons. Burke in part 3 of the *Philosophic Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) defines the beautiful as "that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it. I confine this definition to the merely sensible qualities of things" (83). In this it stands opposed to the sublime's powers to inspire terror/fear: "fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible with regard to sight, is sublime, too, whether this cause of terror, be endured with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on any thing trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous" (53). Kant, on the other hand, isolates the *form* of beauty as its grounds for appeal. With form comes limitation, whereas the sublime derives its effect from the infinite, from limitlessness, a quality that can only be located in the mind, not in phenomenal, finite nature (*The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952], 41 and 97). At the risk of oversimplifying a very complex issue, this is the fundamental distinction between Burke and Kant. For Burke, the sublime is located in the physical world; it is *objective*. For Kant, it is a *subjective* experience, apprehended only in the mind's freedom from the physical world, nature, which allows it to work with abstractions, unlike the imagination's dependence on using images of things.

I found the following useful in trying to obtain an understanding of the complexity of the sublime: Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959); Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-century England* (1935; reprinted, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960); Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*; Edward

- S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Paintings and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); James Kirwan, *Sublimity* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2005); Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Christine Battersby, *The Sublime, Terror, and Human Difference* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2007).
30. Robert de Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de Crèvecoeur*, n. 115.
 31. From early 1788 to 1789, Hunter was on leave in England (Canadian Biography on-line, <http://www.biographi.ca>). Indirect references such as this one suggest that Philbrick's remark that "time references are so vague in the second volume that it is impossible to establish the dates of the travels recounted there" (*St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 151) needs rethinking.
 32. Clumsily set apart from the preceding Niagara passage, which took place in 1789 (Crèvecoeur, *Voyage*, 310–22), this 1790 episode appears to represent the conclusion to an earlier canceled draft: the unidentified "I" who introduces chapter 12 is clearly Francis Ellsworth, who here owns and presumably lives on a plantation located on the western side of the Niagara River, on which the Indian Ladders were located. Hadfield situated Ellsworth on the western shore, as does Crèvecoeur in his 1789 letter (together with its map) to Ally. In what is presumably the later version (and its map) in the *Journey*, Crèvecoeur situates Ellsworth's plantation on the eastern side.

The opening of chapter 12 reads as follows: "The safety and ease with which you saw the east branch of the Falls last year is due to the result of a long visit made three years ago by two Russian travelers, one of whom had already traveled through the interior of the continent. It was for them that I built the Indian Ladders, which lead to the first ledge and beyond, to the last accessible point of the abyss" (*Journey*, 310).
 33. McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 120.
 34. Casey, *Representing Place*, 60–73.
 35. See *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 95, where Harrison employs the term to define a similar structure in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.
 36. Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 152. The letter to Ally was written in 1789, and the chapters on Niagara are set in the same year (although Crèvecoeur may have worked on them throughout the 1790s). Clearly, the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror are not far from Crèvecoeur's mind, as two additional allusions indicate. In chapter 8 (of volume 2), the narrator says that he and Mr. E. "talked of the dark clouds that seemed to be looming over the horizon of Europe in the near future and whose mysteries we were trying to penetrate; of the hope that the turmoils of Europe would never reach our shores" (291). And in chapter 11, Mr. Stedman, speaking of his plans for the two travelers the next day, says that "you will . . . see a Swiss officer, who has recently come from France, where he was witness of bloody scenes whose telling makes one shiver" (307).

As a former land surveyor and farmer in America, as a naturalized citizen of the United States, as a member of France's *petit noblesse* who did not share the prejudices of his class, and as an enlightened *philosophe*, Crèvecoeur was a political moderate and barely escaped persecution. He had a difficult time surviving during the early 1790s, for all his friends and supporters "had either disappeared or were in hiding" by 1792–93 (Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 175). In 1792 a mob stoned to death his friend and patron, the powerful Duke de la Rochefoucauld. He saw to the safety of his sons, who sought sanctuary outside France, and eked out a penurious existence at Pierrepont, his estate in Normandy. In May of 1795 he joined Ally in Altona, near Hamburg

(where he met Mary Wollstonecraft), only returning to France in 1796, after which this trying period gradually improved. Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 162–95, provide a thorough account of his trials during these years.

37. Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 150, 152–53.
38. Of course, the two abrupt digressions on the surf stone and the rattlesnakes might have been in Hadfield's original version.
39. Adams remarks that the *Journey* in "its nature was that of a fictitious rather than an authentic travel book" ("Introduction," xviii). More specifically, Adams refers to Crèvecoeur's "fictitious visit [to the Falls] . . . in the 1790's" (xxvi). Similarly, Philbrick writes that "the imaginary travel narrative . . . serves as the framework of the book. Realistic though many portions of that narrative are, its general shape and tenor are those of the account of a dream-journey" (*St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 150–51), which "disturbs" by reason of the way dream displaces "reality" (144–60).
40. Using Bostelmann's translation of the *Journey into Northern Pennsylvania*, which omitted the French edition's illustrations, commentators have not discussed this map.
41. This supports my reading that chapters 4–11 are a revised version of an earlier intention, of which an unrevised chapter 12 may be the uncanceled remnant. Crèvecoeur obliquely speaks to the customs of naming in 404 n. 2, though there he seems more generally to address the problem of mixing French and Indian place names: "It is to chance or to the colonists' caprice that most of the names on the map are due. Each owner of a fair-sized concession names it as he please and has the name registered. In general it is to the surveyors that is due the preservation of those names by which the Indians designated the lakes, rivers, and mountains." (This note offers further commentary on Mr. E.'s naming of the fountain Agoueghan had shown him.)
42. Hadfield rightly situates Ellsworth's farmstead on the western shore, a detail Crèvecoeur replicates in both his map and narrative. Independently, Major Enys's 1787 account confirms that Ellsworth had settled on the western bank (see Dow, *Anthology and Bibliography of Niagara Falls*, 1:79–80).
43. Crèvecoeur's handling of the Indian Ladders offers further evidence of his revision here. Adjacent to Table Rock (on the Canadian side), the famous Indian Ladder or Ladders (also designated by "N" on the earlier map) assisted travelers in descending into the Niagara chasm. As Crèvecoeur's letter makes clear, his party availed itself of this artificial convenience: "We were obliged to make use of an indian ladder" (610). In vol. 2, chapter 12, of the *Journey* (a section awkwardly following the very abrupt conclusion to the Niagara narrative), what seems a continuation one year later is introduced by an unidentified "I," intimating it to be the tail-end of a now missing antecedent passage (it is the conclusion of an earlier version now canceled by the revised chapters 4–11). That speaker refers to the *Indian Ladders*, making clear that in the earlier version he is the same as the letter's Mr. Ellsworth: "the safety and ease with which you saw the east branch [from the west side] of the Fall last year is due to the result of a long visit made three years ago by two Russian travelers. . . . It was for them that I built the *Indian Ladders*" (2:310; emphasis added).

In the later, revised, draft, which now precedes chapter 12 (the concluding fragment of an earlier, unrevised version), Mr. E., whom Crèvecoeur has transplanted to the river's New York side, can no longer refer to his construction of the Canadian bank's famed climbing aid by its full name, "*Indian Ladders*—that landmark was far too well-known to relocate. Rather, in the revised version Mr. E. drops the proper noun altogether, simply telling his guests that they "will soon discover

- how much the ladders I put there two years ago lessen the danger in descending" (2:11:302). The narrative's speaker (Kayo/Crèvecoeur) also avoids the proper noun of the earlier version: "with the aid of ladders, we climbed down from the resting place on to the very last ledge where it was safe to venture" (303). The *Journey's* map, moreover, does not even illustrate these newly invented, east-side ladders, even though it does preserve the Canadian side's Indian, along with the newer Simcoe's, Ladders (N), *sans* the Ellsworth plantation.
44. As the "translator" explains in a note on page 309: "The two chapters following were discovered to be so spotted that the translator could not read four lines in succession."
 45. This is a recurrent theme in Crèvecoeur. To name two occurrences, see the story of Andrew the Hebridean in *Letters from an American Farmer*, ed. Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 66–82; and the account of Mr. Nadowsky in the *Journey*, 33–40.
 46. Susan Ellsworth, "Francis Ellsworth": [http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Francis_Ellsworth_\(1\)](http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Francis_Ellsworth_(1)).
 47. For the baptismal certificates of Crèvecoeur's children, see Mitchell, *Crèvecoeur*, 314–15.
 48. Roster of Butler's Rangers, reprinted in E. Cruikshank, *The Story of Butler's Rangers and the Settlement of Niagara* (Welland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1893), 116–22; Ellsworth is named on 118.
 49. Thomas Jefferson to François Soulés, January 19, 1787, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, Mina R. Bryan, and Fredrick Aandahl (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 11:56: "I have had a long conversation with M. Crevecoeur. . . . He knows well that canton [Wyoming]. He was in the neighborhood of the place when it was destroyed, saw great numbers of the fugitives, aided them with his waggons, and had the story from all their mouths. He committed notes to writing in the moment, which are now in Normandy at his father's."
 50. *Journey*, 58. Subsequent page numbers appear in the text. Compare this passage with the letter's description of this contrast: "this cataract . . . [shows] the omnipotence of a supreme being, for it certainly is one of the most sublime and terrific objects in nature, at once impressing the mind with reverence and admiration" (611).
 51. See above, n. 2. The difficulty of communication is a recurrent theme in Crèvecoeur. For a discussion that approaches the problem from a different perspective, see Jean F. Beranger, "The Desires of Communication: Narrator and Narratee in *Letters from an American Farmer*," *Early American Literature* 12 (1977): 73–85.
 52. McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 120.
 53. Burke, *Philosophic Enquiry*, 60; Casey, *Representing Place*, 45.
 54. Casey, *Representing Place*, 29, 45, 57; emphasis in original.
 55. Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," in *American Art, 1700–1960: Sources and Documents*, ed. John W. McCoubrey (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 105.
 56. Casey, *Representing Place*, 72 (emphasis in original); Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," 103.
 57. Casey incorrectly says that "every American landscape painter was impelled to paint Niagara Falls . . . though not, ironically, Cole himself" (69).
 58. McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 209, 213.
 59. Philip Conisbee, "The Eighteenth Century: Watteau to Valenciennes," in *Claude to Corot: The Development of Landscape Painting in France*, ed. Alan Wintermute (New York: Colnaghi, in association with the University of Washington Press, 1990), 91.

60. See *Journey*, 303–4.
61. For discussion of Crèvecoeur's use of elements drawn from the drama, see the following: Stanley T. Williams, "Crèvecoeur as a Man of Letters," in *Sketches of Eighteenth-century America: More "Letters from an American Farmer,"* ed. Henri L. Bourdin, Ralph H. Gabriel, and Stanley T. Williams (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1925), 31–34; A. W. Plumstead, "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," in *American Literature, 1764–1789: The Revolutionary Years*, ed. Everett Emerson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977); Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 119–20, 126–27; and Manfred Pütz, "Dramatic Elements and the Problem of Literary Mediation in the Works of Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," in *Real: The Yearbook Research in English and American Literature*, vol. 3, ed. Herbert Grabes, Hans-Jurgen Diller, and Hans Bungert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), 116–25.
62. Vernet, cited in Marianne Roland Michel, "Landscape Painting the Eighteenth Century: Theory, Training, and Its Place in Academic Doctrine," in *Claude to Corot*, ed. Wintermute, 107. This idea of the "middle ground" or the "middle state" in Crèvecoeur was identified as early as Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 107–17. For more recent discussions of the trope in works beyond the *Letters*, see John Hales, "The Landscape of Tragedy: Crèvecoeur's 'Susquehanna,'" *Early American Literature* 20 (1985): 39–63; and David M. Robinson, "Community and Utopia in Crèvecoeur's 'Sketches,'" *American Literature* 62 (1990): 17–31. In a variation on this theme, Hales finds a parallel between Cole's *The Course of Empire* and Crèvecoeur's essay "Susquehanna," wherein "Crèvecoeur traces an example of American civilization from its wilderness beginnings to ruins reclaimed by wilderness" (59, 40).
63. The paradox that the very success at colonizing an area will in time result in the ruination of that locale recurs in Crèvecoeur's writings. For two explorations of this paradox, see 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), 52–67; and Robinson, "Community and Utopia."
64. The word *mosaic* is Crèvecoeur's: "that variety of subjects I have held to your View may[,] when taken Separately[,] appear Trifling but like the various pieces of a Mosaick work properly reunited[,] dare I flatter myself that the collective whole will Tend to Elucidate & make you better acquainted with a country[,] the Interior Policy and Economics of which are so little Known" ("Susquehanna," 165–66). At least two critics have employed *mosaic* to appreciations of Crèvecoeur's writings: Norman S. Grabo, "Crèvecoeur's America: Beginning the World Anew," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 48 (1991): 159–72, for *Letters from an American Farmer*; and Ed White, "Crèvecoeur in Wyoming," *Early American Literature* 43 (2008): 379–407, for the essay "Susquehanna."
65. For discussions of Crèvecoeur's use of the isolated tableau, see Plumstead, "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," 213–31; and Pütz, "Dramatic Elements," 111–30.
66. Laurence Chatel de Brancion, *Carmontelle's Landscape Transparencies: Cinema of the Enlightenment* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 20–21.
67. Cited in *ibid.*, 33.
68. *Ibid.*, 34.
69. *Ibid.*, 44.
70. Even in his otherwise valuable discussion of the *Journey*, Percy G. Adams says of Crèvecoeur's appropriation of the convention that "it is apparent that he tired of his game of the water-soaked

- manuscripts and, after the first volume, threw his materials together with a diminishing consideration for logical sequence" ("Introduction," xix). Thomas Philbrick offers an informative justification for Crèvecoeur's use of the sea-battered manuscript, climaxing in this insight: "the work is not to be merely the literary record of actual observations but is to be an act of the imagination as well, the validity of which is not to be measured in terms of the quantity and accuracy of its information but by its capacity to order and illuminate experience" (*St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 145).
71. Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 152.
 72. De Bracion, *Carmontelle's Landscape Transparencies*, 92.
 73. *Ibid.*, 77. Adams, "Introduction," xxiii–xxviii, discusses Crèvecoeur's documentary purpose.
 74. Although he is writing on Crèvecoeur's *Letters*, Norman S. Grabo's point that "St. John envisions a perpetual return to beginnings" ("Crèvecoeur's America," 170) certainly applies to most of what Crèvecoeur wrote elsewhere. Central to Grabo's thesis that Crèvecoeur's feeling that such efforts to find "beginnings" are doomed rest upon his perception that Crèvecoeur cannot escape what is an essential belief in original sin: "St. John's underlying conviction [is] the universal presence of evil. . . . At heart, St. John's man is keenly dark as Joseph Conrad's Kurtz. Remove any need for self-restraint in a condition where there are as well no external constraints and the outcome is predictable—an unquenchable aspiration for power and an attendant social misery" (168–70).
 75. Edmund Burke had identified astonishment's role in the sublime as the most powerful of the passions it produces: "astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. . . . Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree." He concludes this section by noting the subordinate, or "inferior," passions—"admiration, reverence and respect" (*Philosophical Enquiry*, 53).
 76. The question, of course, echoes the more famous question in *Letters from an American Farmer*: "What then is the American, this new man?" (43–44).
 77. With greater irony, this is the dilemma faced by the speaker in W. B. Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium."
 78. With this, the narrator seems to close the circle, for the text implies (254) that the journey began at Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. That Crèvecoeur returns there reinforces one of the essay's main themes—initiation into the beauty and harmony of social life after the terrifying experience of the sublime afforded by Niagara. The several references made to Shippensburg indicates that Crèvecoeur may have had a farm in the area during the 1760s, giving a firmer foundation to James's identity on Pennsylvania's western frontier. The conclusion to the long note on Shippensburg is particularly suggestive: "I knew this town in its early infancy: I have seen the forests of the neighborhood become fertile fields, and lowlands and beautiful prairies. Never will my glances light on this place without feeling emotions of the very keenest sort" (177–78). The interpretation offered here finds reinforcement in the curious fact, never convincingly explained, that Crèvecoeur, the Orange County, New York, farmer for the ten years preceding his flight in 1779 to New York City, identifies "Carlisle, in Pennsylvania," as the site where he wrote his dedication to the *Letters from an American Farmer*.