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Romanticism & Ecology

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About this Hypertext

This volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* includes an editor's introduction by James McKusick, essays by Kurt Fosso, Timothy Fulford, Kevin Hutchings, Timothy Morton, Ashton Nichols, and William Stroup.

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A note on the cover: The image used on the index page of this volume, "The Peaceable Kingdom" by Edward Hicks, is used by permission of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. This painting is one of 60 that Edward Hicks, an early American Quaker painter and minister, executed on this theme in his lifetime.

About the Romantic Circles Praxis Series

The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** is devoted to using computer technologies for the contemporary critical investigation of the languages, cultures, histories, and theories of Romanticism. Tracking the circulation of Romanticism within these interrelated domains of knowledge, **RCPS** recognizes as its conceptual terrain a world where Romanticism has, on the one hand, dissolved as a period and an idea into a plurality of discourses and, on the other, retained a vigorous, recognizable hold on the intellectual and theoretical discussions of today. **RCPS** is committed to mapping out this terrain with the best and mo st exciting critical writing of contemporary Romanticist scholarship. The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** was formerly known as **Romantic Praxis: Theory and Criticism**. The name was changed in November 1999.

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Romanticism & Ecology

Introduction

James McKusick, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

1. English Romanticism first emerged as a literary movement from a heady combination of political revolution and cosmic optimism, nowhere better expressed than in William Wordsworth's famous lines on the French Revolution: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!" (1805 *Prelude*, book 10, lines 692-693). With the fall of the Bastille and the triumph of the Rights of Man, the possibilities of human liberation suddenly seemed limitless. And this dramatic revolutionary process was not confined to the realm of political institutions; all of human society was caught up in the sweep of revolutionary transformation. In response to Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791-92), Mary Wollstonecraft penned her radical treatise, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), arguing that women are entitled to full equality with men in politics, education, and economic opportunity.

2. The unbounded liberation of human society was accompanied by a dawning realization of the interconnectedness between human beings and all other living things. Erasmus Darwin, in *Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life* (1794), argues that "the features of nature . . . demonstrate to us, that the whole is one family of one parent." In his scientific epic poem, *The Botanical Garden* (1791), Darwin endows plants with lustful human attributes, and in *The Temple of Nature* (1803) he offers a theory of evolution that foreshadows that of his grandson, Charles Darwin, in seeking to demonstrate the affiliation of all living things in a family tree reaching back to the primordial slime. If humans are truly related to all living things, then all living things must be entitled to a share in the "natural rights" that will surely be vindicated in the progress of human liberation. The Rights of Man are only a staging-point along the road to the Rights of Animals, and this road in turn will lead eventually to the total liberation of all living things.

3. Indeed, to many of the Romantic poets, the natural world was regarded as a full participant in the progress of liberty. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his poem "To a Young Ass" (1794), declares his brotherly love for this humble beast of burden: "Poor little Foal of an oppressed race!" (line 1). Wordsworth, in "Lines Written in Early Spring" (1798), expresses a deep sense of kinship with the entire natural world: "To her fair works did nature link / The human soul that through me ran" (lines 5-6). William Blake, in *America: A Prophecy* (circa 1793), offers a visionary narrative of the liberation of the natural world from slavery, tyranny, and oppression:

> The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
> The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
> The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk & dry'd.
> Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awakening!
> Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds & bars are burst;
> Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field:
> Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air;
> Let the inchained soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,
> Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years;
> Rise and look out, his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open.
> And let his wife and children return from the opressors scourge;
> They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream.
> Singing. The Sun has left his blackness, & has found a fresher morning

And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night;
For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease.
(Plate 6)

For Blake, the fall of Empire will result in the redemption of nature, a rediscovery of the human place in a dawn of almost ineffable beauty. The word "Spring" works in this passage as both verb and noun; the captive springs forth into a "fresher morning" of springtime. The Lion and Wolf, erstwhile fierce predators, will lie down with the lamb in a millennial rebirth of innocence. Harking back to the Biblical theme of a peaceable kingdom (most memorably expressed in Isaiah 11.6-7), Blake envisions a world where all creatures live in peaceful harmony, a redeemed community of living things no longer "red in tooth and claw." The same theme is apparent in the art of Edward Hicks (1780-1849), whose painting "The Peaceable Kingdom" offers an archetypal image of unfallen nature in the American Eden. For Hicks, the Biblical depiction of wolf and lamb, leopard and kid, lion and calf, peacefully dwelling together, provides a compelling model for the ways that people of different ethnic heritage can create a community of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. In the historical background of Hicks's painting, William Penn is shown in the midst of a semicircle of Native Americans, negotiating the peace treaty of 1682. By juxtaposing American history with Biblical archetype, Hicks implies that Penn's treaty offers a nonviolent alternative to the militaristic and ultimately genocidal practices of the American nation in its relentless westward expansion.

4. For the English Romantic poets, nature is more than just a passive beneficiary of human endeavors to bring about social and political transformation. The natural world is pervaded by revolutionary energies that contribute to the cause of human liberation. Poised on the brink of revolutionary possibility, nature is imbued with an awesome life-giving potential, as well as a terrible power of destruction. For Percy Bysshe Shelley, the looming mass of Mont Blanc is an ominous harbinger of death, bearing a threat of apocalyptic devastation almost beyond the scope of human imagination:

    Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
    Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
    Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
    Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
    Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
    From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
    The limits of the dead and living world,
    Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
    Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
    Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
    So much of life and joy is lost. The race
    Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
    Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
    And their place is not known.
    ("Mont Blanc" lines 107-120)

    Both natural and human communities are liable to be destroyed by the implacable power of the avalanche; no bird, beast, or insect can escape its dreadful wrath. Like the Old Testament Jehovah, Mont Blanc is utterly unpredictable, often wreaking terrible destruction upon the guilty and innocent alike. However, by invoking the concept of nature as a dwelling-place for all living things, Shelley suggests that there does abide a deep kinship between "the race of man" and the living creatures that surround and nourish us. The sheer vulnerability of humankind in the face of nature's destructive power may serve to remind us that we do coexist with other living things in a single dwelling-place, a global ecosystem. Moreover, Shelley asserts that Mont Blanc can exert a more positive influence upon the

course of human events; it has "a voice . . . to repeal / Large codes of fraud and woe" (lines 80-81). Here again, as in Blake's America, nature is not merely a passive witness to human existence, but may become an active participant in the historical process of human liberation from tyranny and oppression.

5. Shelley's political views were deeply influenced by William Godwin, who argued in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) that the process of human liberation is historically necessary and inevitable. In Godwin's view, personal volition plays no role in the gradual emergence of humankind from subservience into freedom and equality. Rather, like a force of nature, the progress of Reason will certainly triumph over "the spirit of oppression, the spirit of servility, and the spirit of fraud" (Book 8, Chapter 3). According to Godwin's doctrine of Necessitarianism, "the inherent tendency of human intellect is to improvement," and therefore humankind will inevitably succeed in establishing "a state of society [that] is agreeable to reason, and prescribed by justice" (Book 8, Chapter 5). Godwin offers a glowing description of this future state, where all people share equally in the "bounties of nature" and are free to "expatiate" in the realms of intellectual discovery:

   > In a state of society where men lived in the midst of plenty, and where all shared alike the bounties of nature, these sentiments would inevitably expire. The narrow principle of selfishness would vanish. No man being obliged to guard his little store, or provide, with anxiety and pain, for his restless wants, each would lose his individual existences in the thought of the general good. No man would be an enemy to his neighbour, for they would have no subject of contention and of consequence, philanthropy would resume the empire which reason assigns her. Mind would be delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal support, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her. Each would assist the enquiries of all. (Book 8, chapter 3)

   In Godwin's view, the existing forms of law and government will simply wither away; there is no need for revolutionary insurgency or violent uprising. Although such a view might seem naively optimistic in its conception of human nature, it nevertheless offered a viable source of utopian ideas to many of the English Romantic writers, from Southey and Coleridge (with their egalitarian scheme of Pantisocracy) to Mary and Percy Shelley (who sought to realize an intellectual community with Lord Byron on the shores of Lake Geneva).

6. Godwin goes on to describe the economic basis of this visionary utopian community. He claims that no one will have to work more than half an hour per day, while the rest of one's time will be spent in the pursuit of poetry, mathematics, and philosophical reflection. All superfluous luxuries will be abolished; commerce will cease; urban populations will be dispersed to the countryside. Godwin envisions a purely agrarian society in which every local community is self-governing and self-sustaining, living entirely upon the produce of the local soil:

   > Every man would have a frugal, yet wholesome diet; every man would go forth to that moderate exercise of his corporal functions that would give hilarity to the spirits; none would be made torpid with fatigue, but all would have leisure to cultivate the kindly and philanthropical affections, and to let loose his faculties in the search of intellectual improvement. (Book 8, chapter 3).

7. Such a community would offer an ideal mix of physical exercise and "intellectual improvement," along with a healthful diet and friendly social interaction with other community members. Godwin further envisioned an unlimited degree of sexual freedom (since marriage would be abolished as a retrograde social institution), and he optimistically foretold a time when humans would live practically forever. On the whole, this future society sounded like a pretty good deal to Godwin's contemporaries!

8. Godwin's ecological utopia was not only influential in his own day, but has continued to serve as an archetypal basis for all subsequent experiments in the establishment of self-sufficient farming communities. During the 1840s, the American Transcendentalists sought to establish agrarian communities at Brook Farm and Fruitlands[1], while Henry David Thoreau experimented with individual self-reliance by building a cabin at Walden Pond. In the twentieth century, thousands of Americans sought to go back to the land, with agrarian lifestyle experiments that range from the hippie communes of the 1970s to the sprawling suburban "farmettes" of the 1990s. Perhaps the most dramatic embodiment of Godwin's ecological utopia yet attempted in North America is the vast, expensive greenhouse known as Biosphere II, constructed in the desert mountains near Phoenix, Arizona in the late 1980s. Conceived as a hermetically sealed and totally self-sustaining artificial ecosystem, Biosphere II was also planned as an experimental community in which a group of "Biospherians" would be voluntarily locked inside the dome for up to eighteen months at a time. In theory, they would spend a few hours each day growing crops, with the rest of their time devoted to scientific research. In practice, however, the Biospherians found that their living conditions were far from ideal; they spent most of their time in a desperate struggle to survive. Crops refused to grow, ants and cockroaches infested the dome, the water became polluted with human waste, while the atmosphere grew saturated with carbon dioxide. Like most Godwinian experiments, this one failed.

9. The inevitable failure of Godwin's ideal society was foretold by Thomas Robert Malthus in his *Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society, with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers* (1798). Malthus provides a fairly convincing demonstration that no conceivable form of social organization can satisfy the innate human desire for happiness in the long run, because population will always tend to outrun the available food supply. Human populations always tend to increase in an exponential progression, while their means of subsistence can only increase in an arithmetical progression. As a result, a given population will expand to the limit of subsistence, but will then be held in check by "the ravages of war, pestilence, famine, or the convulsions of nature" (Chapter 6). Malthus offers an extended critique of Godwin's *Political Justice*, arguing that even if the ideal society envisioned by Godwin were attainable, it would soon relapse into all the miseries of the normal human condition, because its rapidly growing population would rapidly outstrip all conceivable means of subsistence. As the grim forces of starvation and pestilence begin to take their toll, the ideal Godwinian community will quickly collapse into abject misery and selfishness: This beautiful fabric of imagination vanishes at the severe touch of truth. The spirit of benevolence, cherished and invigorated by plenty, is repressed by the chilling breath of want. The hateful passions that had vanished reappear. The mighty law of self-preservation expels all the softer and more exalted emotions of the soul. The temptations to evil are too strong for human nature to resist. (Chapter 10) With this grim depiction of human behavior in the face of "the chilling breath of want," Malthus provides an all-too-realistic portrait of the demise of an ideal Godwinian community. Perhaps the denizens of Biosphere II should have read Malthus before embarking upon their doomed experiment in a sealed artificial ecosystem.

10. There is no escape from the grim calculus of Malthusian theory. Indeed, Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* has proven foundational to all subsequent work in population dynamics, and it provided a crucial impetus for Charles Darwin's discovery of evolution by means of natural selection. At the same time, however, we must concede that there is something quite depressing in the gesture by which Malthus deflates Godwin's grand speculation. Like the skeptical philosopher Apollonius, who cruelly intrudes upon the wedding celebration of Lamia and Lycius (in John Keats's poem *Lamia*), Malthus has a way of ruining every party that he attends. The ideal worlds created by the Romantic imagination have trouble sustaining themselves in the presence of Malthusian gloom. Keats trenchantly describes the pernicious process by which Philosophy will "unweave a rainbow":

    There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:

We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine -
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.
(*Lamia*, lines 231-238)

Mean old Apollonius! Given a choice between the luminous beauty of the rainbow and the "touch of cold philosophy" (line 230), who would not choose the former?

11. Herein lies the essential dilemma of Romantic Ecology. The modern science of ecology is founded upon a bleak Malthusian calculus of scarcity, a world of limited resources where organisms must struggle to survive. The competition among individual organisms for scarce resources is absolutely essential, not only to the modern ecosystem concept, but also to the Darwinian theory of evolution, which necessarily entails "the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life."[2] To be sure, modern ecological science also places significant stress upon the concepts of biodiversity, altruism, and symbiosis, and these concepts offer some scope for understanding an ecosystem as a place where collaboration and mutually beneficial exchange can occur alongside the more ruthless forms of competition. But there is really nowhere to hide from the underlying Malthusian dynamic of potentially limitless demand for scarce resources. To the extent that the science of ecology has had an impact upon the contemporary environmentalist movement, it is largely manifested in the doomsday scenario of global catastrophe that is said to be approaching in the very near future. According to this scenario, there is very little reason for hope; the exponential growth of human population, coupled with the environmental impact of pollution, global warming, and ozone depletion, will inevitably result in a total collapse of human civilization. Probably this will occur in our own (very short and miserable) lifetimes. Malthus was right!!! We are all doomed!!!

12. And yet there may still be reason for hope. Perhaps, despite the dire predictions of Malthus, human civilization will find a way to avoid a swift and inevitable collapse. If so, the antidote to Malthusian gloom will almost certainly be found in Godwin's more optimistic belief in the ability of human beings, as rational agents, to build a sustainable society. The English Romantic poets, working with Godwin's vision of an ideal community founded on the instinct of benevolence, offered many different versions of such a sustainable society. Godwin contributed a great deal to the utopian vision that underlies much of Romantic poetry, and although it is generally difficult to construct the blueprint of an ideal society upon such an equivocal foundation, it is nevertheless useful to examine the possible relevance that Romantic idealism may have for our own historical moment. It is the underlying thesis of this collection of essays that Romantic poetry expresses an environmental ethic; that the ideal of community among all living creatures is essential to our own survival as a species; and that there is present relevance in the Godwinian aspiration to create a sustainable society on the basis of an agrarian mode of production in local communities.

13. Each of the essays in this collection offers a distinctive new approach to Romantic Ecology. The lead essay by Ashton Nichols offers a historical overview of the methods of observational science in the century before Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), arguing that the connection between living things was conceived in this period mainly in terms of giving and receiving pleasure. Rather than engaging in a grim struggle for existence, living creatures were understood to be involved in an economy of intellectual sympathy, as described by Erasmus Darwin in his scientifically-detailed erotic poem on "The Loves of the Plants" (Part 1 of *The Botanic Garden*, 1791). In the next essay, Kurt Fosso offers some closely related insights, arguing that the Linnaean system of taxonomy enacted a

Copernican revolution in the existing understanding of the place of humans in the natural world. No longer monarchs of all they surveyed, human beings were resituated as one animal among many similar, interconnected species. The Romantic poets' recurrent sense of kinship with animals emerges from this new scientific understanding of the underlying familial relationships among all living things.

14. William Stroup's essay, "Henry Salt on Shelley: Literary Criticism and Ecological Identity," offers further evidence of the deep affinity between science and poetry in the nineteenth century. Stroup argues that one of Shelley's most perceptive Victorian readers, Henry Stephens Salt, is an important forerunner of modern ecocritical approaches to Shelley. By carefully examining Salt's interpretation of Shelley, Stroup elucidates the ideological uses to which "nature" has been put. Going beyond formalism, Salt engages with the challenging ethical and environmental ideas in Shelley's work, and explores their relevance to his own time. Modern readers of Shelley have much to learn from such an approach.

15. Kevin Hutchings, in his essay on "Gender, Environment, and Imperialism in William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, examines the implications of the correlation between Bromion's brutal appropriation and rape of Oothoon's body and the figurative (but no less violent) "rape" of the natural world. Hutchings argues that Blake's poem, while overtly concerned with the issue of human slavery, is also very much concerned with the parallel conquest and "enslavement" of nature. Tim Fulford's essay, "Wordsworth's 'The Haunted Tree' and the Sexual Politics of Landscape," is likewise concerned with the issues of power and desire that lurk at the heart of male violence, whether it is directed toward the domination of landscape or of the female body. However, in Fulford's view, Wordsworth founds the English conception of nature not on rape and metamorphosis (as in Greek myth), but on a sensual playfulness - on looking but not touching. Fulford examines the political implications of this relationship to landscape, concluding that "Wordsworth's green England, by 1820 at least, is not [Jonathan] Bate's but [Edmund] Burke's, not revolutionary but conservative." For both Blake and Wordsworth, the natural landscape is figured as a domain for the enactment of male desire, whether transgressive or conservative in its political outlook.

16. Timothy Morton has contributed the final essay in this collection: "'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" as an Ambient Poem; a Study of a Dialectical Image; with Some Remarks on Coleridge and Wordsworth." The key themes of this essay are in certain respects complementary to those developed by Hutchings and Fulford. Morton examines Jane Taylor's poem "The Star"—a nursery-rhyme that has received very little attention from critics of Romanticism—as an exemplary instance of "ambient poetry," that is, a poem that is engaged in the representation of female identity within domestic space. Such "domestic pastoral," in Morton's view, is necessarily implicated in a dialectic between the local and the global, and for this reason it offers a novel way of reading literature with a mind for ecology. Morton's essay provides an authentically new approach to Romantic Ecology by interrogating the representation of nature by a woman writer of the Romantic period. By exploring what Morton terms "a non-essentialist form of indigenousness," this final essay further broadens the boundaries of utopian discourse in the Romantic era.

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Notes

1 Brook Farm was an experimental farm at West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Founded in 1841 by George Ripley, this farm was an experiment in cooperative living that combined manual labor with education and intellectual conversation. Members included Nathaniel Hawthorne and Charles S. Dana; visitors included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, William Ellery Channing, Horace Greeley, and Orestes Brownson. An intellectual success, but a financial failure, Brook Farm finally folded in 1847. Fruitlands was another experimental communal farm of the 1840s.

2 This phrase occurs in the title of Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859).

Romanticism & Ecology

The Loves of Plants and Animals: Romantic Science and the Pleasures of Nature

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Note: All the hyperlinks in the following text take the reader to an off-site web site called A Romantic Natural History*, produced by the author, and hosted at Dickinson College*.

[O]ur intellectual sympathies [rest] with . . . the miseries, or with the joys, of our fellow creatures.
- Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia* (1794)

1. When Wordsworth notes his faith that "every flower / Enjoys the air it breathes," or when Keats describes an unseen nightingale pouring forth its "soul abroad / In such an ecstasy," we may be inclined to classify these lyrical claims as Romantic hyperbole, rhetorically suspect forms of anthropomorphism, overly sentimental and poetically overblown. Likewise, when Wordsworth's heart fills "with pleasure" at the sight of daffodils, or when Blake says "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight," we may think that the poet is protesting too little or offering too much credit to the natural world for what is, in fact, a strictly "human" emotion. In this essay I will examine Romantic claims about pleasure in the natural world and pleasure derived from the natural world in terms of the "science" of the century before Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, particularly the science of animate nature, the belief that all living things (and perhaps even "nonliving" things) were connected by a force that could be described, at least partly, in terms of the natural ability to please or to be pleased. I will conclude with a reflection on connections between the method of observational science in the Romantic period, the writing of poetry, and the sources of pleasure.

2. Pleasure in the natural world is a concept that links Romantic poetry and Romantic science in significant ways. Pleasure located in the nonhuman world and pleasure taken by humans in the natural world are concepts that co-mingle in a whole range or Romantic metaphors and rhetorical practices, anthropocentric and otherwise. In fact, the apparent anthropocentrism of much eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century scientific and poetic thinking turns out to be much more centered in the nonhuman world than we might think. This essay will link discussions of plant and animal "pleasure" in the works of Erasmus Darwin, and in Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (often by way of Oliver Goldsmith, who introduced many of Buffon's ideas to a British audience) with the use of "pleasure" in poems by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. This link between the poetic and the scientific in Romantic natural history also reveals aspects of our current cultural sense of the interrelatedness of human and nonhuman nature.

3. Where does Romantic talk about the heart filling with pleasure like dancing daffodils or a bird being described as a "world of delight" come from? It comes, to cite one obvious source, from an otherwise hard-nosed medical practitioner and experimental scientist like Erasmus Darwin. Here is Darwin, in one of his characteristic (and often controversial) descriptions of the love life of plants:

> Hence on green leaves the sexual Pleasures dwell,
> And Loves and Beauties crowd the blossom's bell;
> The wakeful Anther in his silken bed
> O'er the pleas'd Stigma bows his waxen head;
> With meeting lips, and mingling smiles, they sup
> Ambrosial dew-drops from the nectar'd cup;

Or buoy'd in air the plumy Lover springs,
And seeks his panting bride on Hymen-wings.
(*Temple of Nature*, II, 263-70)

Darwin was roundly criticized, as had been Linnaeus before him, for this tendency to sexualize the life of plants.[1] For Darwin, however, these erotic descriptions of plant love (and even plant lust) were an analogue for human sexuality and an accurate description of the way flowers actually worked. Indeed, almost all of Darwin's claims about plant sexuality were based on direct observation. He often expanded his poetic rhapsodies on the sex life of plants with prose footnotes that also ascribe a wide range of intentionality and emotion to the plant kingdom: "The vegetable passion of love is agreeably seen in the flower of the parnassia, in which the males alternately approach and recede from the female; and in the flower of nigella, or devil in the bush, in which the tall females bend down to their dwarf husbands. But I was this morning surprised to observe . . . the manifest adultery of several females of the plant Collinsonia, who had bent themselves into contact with the males of other flowers of the same plant in their vicinity, neglectful of their own" ("Economy of Vegetation," IV, p. 121 n.). Claims like these about plant life consistently suggest that willfulness, intention, and pleasure all extend - albeit in diminished forms - from humans to animals to plants, and even beyond.

4. More important for my argument than Darwin's specific descriptions of the sexual life of plants are his views, most clearly summarized in the poetry and footnotes of *The Temple of Nature* (1803) about natural pleasures. In this work, Darwin clearly describes pleasure in any one part of animate creation as an aspect of pleasure extending through the whole of the terrestrial biosphere: "From the innumerable births of the larger insects, and the spontaneous productions of the microscopic ones, every part of organic matter from the recrements of dead vegetable or animal bodies, on or near the surface of the earth, becomes again presently re-animated; which by increasing the number and quantity of living organisms, though many of them exist but for a short time, adds to the sum total of terrestrial happiness" (*Temple*, 189 n.). Pleasure in the entire biotic realm is increased not only by the prolific reproduction of "insects" (the word means "small creatures" to Darwin) and microscopic organisms but by the death and organic regeneration of larger creatures: "The sum total of the happiness of organized nature is probably increased rather than diminished, when one large old animal dies, and is converted into many thousand young ones; which are produced or supported with their numerous progeny by the same organic matter" (*Temple*, 190-91 n.). Darwin also notes that the Pythagorean belief in the transmigration of souls derives merely from the organic and "perpetual transmigration of matter from one body to another, of all vegetables and animals, during their lives, as well as after their deaths" (191 n.). This chemical and organic movement of elements through the bodies of living creatures leads, over eons, to a unified and complete "system of morality and benevolence, as all creatures thus became related to each other" (192 n.) in terms of the matter that composes them. What Darwin calls the "felicity of organic life," is a function of the "happiness and misery of [all] organic beings"; this felicity, he says, depends ultimately, on "the actions of the organs of sense" and on "the fibres which perform locomotion" (194 n.). Every living thing, Darwin concludes, is subject to "immediate sources" of "pains and pleasures," the encouragement or avoidance of which might "increase the sum total of organic happiness" (194-95 n.). Pain and pleasure, he goes on to argue, are a function of the expansion and contraction of nerve and muscles fibers of sensation, organic elements which exist in all living things, albeit in a variety of forms and intensities. All emotional responses - pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness - are thus based solely on the motion of material parts of each life form.

5. Finally, and perhaps most dramatically, Darwin's understanding of geology leads him to conclude that the planet itself is a record of the pleasures of earlier ages of animate beings: "Not only the vast calcerous provinces . . . and also whatever rests upon them . . . clay, marl, sand, and coal . . . gave the pleasure of life to the animals and vegetables, which formed them; and thus constitute monuments of the past happiness of these organized beings. But as those remains of former life are not again totally

decomposed . . . they supply more copious food to the successions of new animal or vegetable beings on their surface . . . . and hence the quantity or number of organized bodies, and their improvement in size, as well as their happiness, has been continually increasing, along with the solid parts of the globe" (*Temple*, 195-96 n.). More dry land over eons, more living things century upon century, more happiness produced from millennium to millennium. At this point, Darwin breaks down the boundary between organic and inorganic as part of his wider economy of nature, what we might now call his "ecology." Material processes, compounds, and elements—which he always describes in fundamentally chemical terms (clay, sand, coal, heat, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, phosphorus)—compose, decompose, and re-compose, first into inorganic, then into organic, and ultimately into animate creatures, including human beings.

6. Darwin also argues that the plant and animal kingdoms are connected by the possibility of sensation. In *Zoonomia*, he describes "Vegetable Animation": "The fibres of the vegetable world, as well as those of the animal, are excitable into a variety of motions by irritations of external objects. This appears particularly in the mimosa or sensitive plant, whose leaves contract on the slightest injury " (I, 73).[2] But the "fibres" responsible for sensation are also related to pleasure: "when pleasure or pain affect the animal system, many of its motions both muscular and sensual are brought into action . . . The general tendency of these motion is to arrest [i.e. stabilize] and to possess the pleasure, or to dislodge or avoid the pain" (I, 31). The conclusion Darwin draws is obvious: "the individuals of the vegetable world may be considered as inferior or less perfect animals" (I, 73).

7. The belief that sensation might spread through all of animate creation was widely discussed in Europe and America throughout the eighteenth century by natural scientists, natural theologians, and poets, among others. As Christoph Irmscher has written recently, this was an age "that ascribed sensitivity, even souls, to plants" (31). But as Erasmus Darwin suggested, the point was not merely that plants might have souls, but that "souls" might turn out to be nothing more than complex combinations of material (i.e. muscular, nervous, electro-chemical) motions. John Bartram, writing to Benjamin Rush, noted that there was much to be learned about "sensation" in plants, even though many animals were already known to be "endowed with most of our [that is, human] faculties & pashions & . . . intelect" [sic] (690).

8. Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, describes many of the animals he catalogues in terms of human passions and intellect. Buffon's marmot "delights in the regions of ice and snow" (121). His elephant is "susceptible of gratitude, and capable of strong attachment" (152) and "loves the society of his equals" (153). If "vindictive," the pachyderm "is no less grateful" (159). Numerous writers were willing to extend pleasure even into the realm of lower life forms. A 1792 compilation by several natural historians of insects includes comments such as the following: each insect, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, is "adapted for procuring its particular pleasures" (2); indeed, every insect, like every creature, "was formed for itself, and each allowed to seize as great a quantity of happiness from the universal stock . . . each was formed to make the happiness of each" (6). "The butterfly, to enjoy life, needs no other food but the dews of heaven" (75) and "it is impossible to express the fond attachment which the working ants shew to their rising progeny" (125). Animals, of course, had been connected to humans sensation and emotional response since ancient history: loyal dogs, sagacious elephants, wily foxes, diligent ants. What was new by 1790 was the sense that these were not just rhetorical comparisons of behavior between human and animal realms, but that such observationally supported comparisons reflected a deeper - and organic - unity of all living things.

9. Eighteenth-century talk about emotion and sensation in "lower" life forms was also related to an underlying philosophical monism, well articulated by Goethe. In "the Experiment as Mediator between Subject and Object" (1792) Goethe offers a holistic critique of "living Nature" that was designed to counter the fragmentary quality of empirical science: "Nothing happens in living Nature that does not

bear some relation to the whole. The empirical evidence may seem quite isolated, we may view our experiments as mere isolated facts, but this is not to say that they are, in fact, isolated. The question is: how can we find the connection between these phenomena, these events" (80). Likewise, Goethe is willing to include "joy and pain" among the categories that are applicable to any "organism": "Basic characteristics of an individual organism: to divide, to unite, to merge into the universal, to abide in the particular, to transform itself, to define itself, and, as living things tend to appear under a thousand conditions, to arise and vanish, to solidify and melt, to freeze and flow, to expand and contract . . . . Genesis and decay, creation and destruction, birth and death, joy and pain, all are interwoven with equal effect and weight; thus even the most isolated event always presents itself as an image and metaphor for the most universal" (52). So while observational science is suggesting that expansion, contraction, attraction and repulsion of tiny particles are physical properties of all living (and perhaps nonliving) things, the metaphysic of Romantic science argues that characteristics found in one part of nature are likely to exist throughout the entire natural system, albeit in differing - reduced or expanded - forms.

10. Oliver Goldsmith, whose *A History of the Earth and Animated Nature* was drawn largely from Buffon and other European naturalists, restrains himself from extending sensation into the realm of the inorganic, but he too indicates how widespread was the belief in common elements pervading the germ plasm, a unity behind the dazzling variety that characterized the animate world. He says that the prevalence of invisible living creatures, animals and plants too small to see, has led "some late philosophers into an opinion, that all nature was animated, that every, even the most inert mass of matter, was endued with life and sensation, but wanted organs to make those sensations perceptible to the observer." (IV, 322). The link between human and animal pleasure thus reaches well into the plant kingdom by the 1790s, producing a view well summarized by Buffon himself: "it is impossible to finish our short review of nature [over 30 volumes!] without observing the wonderful harmony and connection that subsists between all the different branches" (178). Pleasure described in one part of nature reflects the possibility, indeed the likelihood, of pleasure spread throughout all of nature.

11. Now let us consider a poet like Percy Shelley, who can load every rift of his imagery with ore derived from the natural science of his age, often in ways that precisely link human and nonhuman "feelings." In one of the best known examples of this tendency - taken from "Ode to the West Wind" - Shelley imagines plants beneath the sea in sympathy with plants on land: "The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear / The sapless foliage of the ocean, know / Thy voice [the wind's], and suddenly grow gray with fear, / And tremble and despoil themselves" (ll. 39-42). Shelley adds a footnote to these lines that sounds as though it could have come directly from Erasmus Darwin: "the phenomenon alluded to . . . is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons" (577). Shelley's science here may be wrong, but his imaginative insight links with the emerging science of his own time to produce an idea that is surely correct: organic activity beneath the waves has important - Shelley says "sympathetic"; we might now say "ecological" - connections to events on the land.

12. Similarly, Shelley's sky-lark sings with "shrill delight" (l. 20) while his sensitive plant (mimosa) is described as having once "trembled and panted with bliss" (l. 9). Shelley's sensitive plant derives directly from Erasmus Darwin's reflections on the mimosa as a strange bridge between the plant and animal kingdoms. Yet Shelley goes beyond the mere ascription of sensation to the plant, suggesting a direct connection between this plant and certain sorts of human emotion (of course, his real subject in the poem is clearly a "sensitive" poet like himself). The affinity of plants for other plants, and the image of plants as analogous to forms of attraction throughout the material universe, reaches an apotheosis in lines from Shelley's botanical poem. These flowers

    Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one

Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;
For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbor shed
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.
(ll. 64-69)

Of course, the suggestion that aspects of the entirety of nature might be analogous to human nature is as old as poetry itself. What is new in a poet like Shelley is the sense of how an emotion like pleasure can organically link humans with the nonhuman world. In a rarely discussed poem entitled "The Birth of Pleasure," Shelley is explicit about the central role of pleasure, even at the dawn of creation: "At the creation of the Earth / Pleasure, that divinest birth, / From the soil of heaven did rise, / Wrapped in sweet wild melodies" (584).

13. Consider, from this perspective, Shelley's cloud, whose nourishing water offers sustenance to "thirsting flowers" and provides shade for delicate leaves in their "noonday dreams" (ll. 1,4). In this proto-ecological vision of the hydrological cycle ("I pass through the pores of the oceans and shores; / I change, but I cannot die" [ll. 74-75]), Shelley elaborates electrical attractions between ground and clouds - only recently described by Benjamin Franklin and by Shelley's own science teacher Adam Walker (from Syon House Academy and Eton) - as a kind of "love" between earth and sky. He also says that the "moist Earth" is "laughing below" (l. 72) as the cloud brings various forms of pleasure to each part of this natural cycle. Even a satiric and imaginative flight of fancy like "The Witch of Atlas" is shot through with precise details drawn from the natural science of Shelley's time, and linked to powerful "sympathy" between the natural and the human realms: "Vipers kill, though dead" (l. 2), "a young kitten" may "leap and play as grown cats do, / Till its claws come" (ll. 6-7) and Mary Shelley's gentle hand would not "crush the silken wingèd fly" (l. 9). The may-fly dies almost before it is born, and even the swan's song in the sun evokes a smile as serene as Mary's (stanza ii).

14. Wordsworth, in a famous passage from *The Prelude*, links a similarly "scientific" form of observation to a pleasure that is essential to the very definition of the poetic. Wordsworth, however, sees this link in much more psychological terms than Shelley: "To unorganic natures I transferred / My own enjoyments, or, the power of truth / Coming in revelation, I conversed / With things that really are" (1805, II, 410-13).Wordsworth sees this interaction as more than merely a symbolic representation of his inner states in the outer world. Rather, he links feelings of pleasure in himself directly to emotions that he ascribes to the rest of the world: "From Nature and her overflowing soul / I had received so much that all my thoughts / Were steeped in feeling" (II, 416-18). This is not, however, just watered down, Wordsworthian pantheism: his 1805 description of the unity of natural process owe as much to the natural science of the era as it does to his own emerging "theology":

I felt the sentiment of being spread
O'er all that moves . . .
O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself
spacerspacerspacer. . . in all things
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.
(II, 420-21, 425-27, 429-30)

A passage like this reflects the natural history of Wordsworth's time while also connecting his emotional (and poetic) power to similar powers that he attributes to the plants and animals around him. His daffodils are only the most famous example of this recurrent tendency: "A Poet could not but be

gay / In such a laughing company" (ll. 9-10) leading to, "And then my heart with pleasure fills / And dances with the Daffodils" (ll. 17-18).

15. We should recall that Wordsworth's image derives not only from his own observation, but also from Dorothy Wordsworth's journal text. Dorothy's recollection sounds initially like that of a natural historian: "The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs . . . a few primroses by the roadside, wood-sorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry yellow flower which Mrs. C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side" (109). Then, in an important transitional sentence, Dorothy reveals her "fancy" going to work on these objects of nature: "We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them [the end we did not see (erased)] along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road" (109). Only at this moment does Dorothy launch into the poetic possibility that these flowers can be more closely linked to human emotions than we might think, even as she gives up on formal grammar and syntax: "I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing" (109, 15 April 1802).

16. An earlier passage from Dorothy's journal reveals a similar connection of wind-caused motion, animation, and the link between human emotion and the natural world. The scene takes place during a winter wind on Grasmere Lake. I quote the passage in its entirely because it so clearly reveals the rhetorical movement from inanimate images (wind on the water), to animate images ("peacock's tail," "they made it all alive"), to humanized emotion applied to a flower ("let it live if it can"):

    > We amused ourselves for a long time in watching the Breezes some as if they came from the bottom of the lake spread in a circle, brushing along the surface of the water, and growing more delicate, as it were thinner and of a *paler* colour till they died away. Others spread out like a peacock's tail, and some went right forward this way and that in all directions. The lake was still where these breezes were not, but they made it all alive. I found a strawberry blossom in a rock. The little slender flower had more courage than the green leaves, for *they* were but half expanded and half grown, but the blossom was spread full out. I uprooted it rashly, and I felt as if I had been committing an outrage, so I planted it again. It will have but a stormy life of it, but let it live if it can" (82-3, 31 January 1802).

    Dorothy's sudden emotional response to a flower here reminds us of her brother's pantheistic reaction to his own impulsive destruction of nature in "Nutting": "I felt a sense of pain when I beheld / The silent trees and the intruding sky - / Then, dearest Maiden . . . with gentle hand / Touch, - for there is a Spirit in the woods" (ll. 50-52, 53-54).

17. A manuscript text from 1798 reveals just how far William is willing to go in linking his own sentiments about the nonhuman world to the natural "science" of his time, a science that could associate all animate and inanimate objects into a naturalistic unity:

    > There is an active principle alive in all things;
    > In all things, in all natures, in the flowers
    > And in the trees, in every pebbly stone
    > That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
    > The moving water and the invisible air.

All beings have their properties which spread
Beyond themselves, a power by which they make
Some other being conscious of their life
(676).

18. Coleridge understands this connection between pleasure within the self and pleasure taken from the external world, although he describes the link more dispassionately and more ambiguously than even Wordsworth. We might call Coleridge's version of this phenomenon transference: that is, our own emotions can be transferred onto nature for psychological reasons. Here is Coleridge's clearest example: "A child scolding a flower in the words in which he had been himself scolded and whipped, is poetry - passion past with pleasure" (*Animae Poetae* 10). The child transfers his own enjoyments, and miseries, out onto the objects of nature that surround him. For Coleridge, in "To Nature": "It may indeed be phantasy, when I / Essay to draw from all created things / Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings" (ll.1-3). But we should remember that this is the same poet who longs passionately for what we might now call a unified ecosystem ("all of animated nature"), a unity in "Nature" that he describes as a strange music of mind identified with joy:

    O! the one Life within us and abroad,
    Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
    A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
    Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where.
    ("The Eolian Harp," ll. 26-29)

    Coleridge connects romantic science to the pleasures of nature in precisely the ways I have been describing. His wild goat looks at the cataract "in awe" ("On a Cataract," l.18). The ox in "Recantation" may be described in Coleridge's footnote as a symbol for the French Revolution, but the animal is nevertheless presented in terms of its naturalized emotions: "The ox was glad, as well he might, / Thought the green meadow no bad sight / And frisk'd, - to shew his huge delight" (ll. 9-11). Likewise, the sympathetic creature described fraternally in "To a Young Ass" ("I hail thee *Brother*" [l.26]) has a "moping head," (ms. 1794), and the poet asks if its "sad heart thrill'd with filial pain" (l. 13). Coleridge's most famous image in this regard is perhaps the transformed description of the sea-snakes in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Within the space of fifty lines of this nature-anthem, the "thousand thousand slimy things" (l. 238) crawling on the surface of the ocean are re-imagined by the mariner as "O happy living things!" (l. 282). Coleridge is also honest enough to admit, however, in "The Nightingale," that it is often merely the poet who fills "all things with himself" and makes "all gentle sounds," including the song of the nightingale, "tell back the tale / Of his own sorrow" (ll. 19-21). The "joy" we feel within ourselves often seems to be reflected back on us by the natural world beyond us. Then again, as the always ambivalent Coleridge might say, maybe not; perhaps our feelings belong only to us.

19. Notice how a poetic natural historian, the polymath Oliver Goldsmith, links human pleasure to animal pleasure in ways comparable to Coleridge. In the section of *Animated Nature* devoted to birds, Goldsmith says: "we now come to a beautiful and loquacious race of animals, that embellish our forests, amuse our walks, and exclude solitude from out most shady retirements. From these man has nothing to fear; their pleasures, their desires, and even their animosities, only serve to enliven the general picture of Nature, and give harmony to meditation" (III, 3). Within a few pages, when Goldsmith claims that "the return of spring is the beginning of pleasure" (III, 14), he is similarly eliding the distinction between human and nonhuman pleasures. But Goldsmith also reminds us that the pleasure provided by nature is not always here for our benefit. In this vernal season filled with pleasures, he continues, the "delightful concert of the grove, which is much admired by man, is no way studied for his [human] amusement: it is usually the call of the male to the female, his efforts to soothe

her during times of incubation; or it is a challenge between two males for the affections of some common favourite" (III, 14). Lest we mistake the birds as singing a song for our benefit, Goldsmith reminds us that bird-song is about *bird* pleasure in mothering or in copulation, not about the desires of poetic or scientific humans.

20. Finally, let us consider Keats. In "On the Grasshopper and Cricket," Keats's grasshopper is as full of the pleasures of life as Goldsmith or Erasmus Darwin could have ever imagined: "He takes the lead / In summer luxury; he has never done / With his delights, for when tired out with fun / He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed" (ll. 5-8). Or, from "Sleep and Poetry": "What is more soothing than the pretty hummer / That stays one moment in an open flower / And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower?" (ll. 2-5) and, "a myrtle, fairer than / E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds / Lifts its sweet head into the air" (ll. 248-50). By now we should appreciate that these are not merely hyperbolic flights of imaginative fancy. This is Keats describing the natural world as he understands it. My suggestion is born out by an intertextual reference in Miriam Allott's note to the "wailful choir" of "small gnats" mourning in "To Autumn." The lines echo the 1817 entomology written by William Kirby and William Spence: "tribes of Tipulidae (usually, but improperly called gnats) assemble . . . and form themselves into choirs, that alternately rise and fall . . . These little creatures may be seen at all seasons, amusing themselves with their choral dances" (653).

21. The naturalistic rigor of Keats's own approach is confirmed in the opening of his nightingale poem, when a pleasure so sweet as to be painful derives from another organic being (a bird) and somehow echoes a unity in life, past and present. The speaker's heart aches. He is at once drowsy and numb. He is drunk on an emotion as powerful as that produced by a natural intoxicant (hemlock). We should think back at this point to Erasmus Darwin, who describes a chemical affinity between us and the opium poppy ("dull opiate" [l. 3]) that can transport us out of our ordinary pleasure into pleasures of a different, but no less powerful, kind (*Botanic Garden*, "Loves of the Plants," II, 57 n.). How might these flowers produce such powerful emotional and narcotic affects unless there was some organic sympathy - Darwin says a chemical "affinity" - between us and these plants.

22. Keats is happy in an almost excruciating way ("too happy in thine happiness" [l.6]), but this intensity reveals a pleasure that is ordinary for this bird. The bird's happy lot makes the poet's lot in life seem somehow diminished. What would a human give, Keats implies, to sing with such "full-throated ease" [l. 10]. Having heard this bird singing, human mortality appears to be much less of a problem to the observant poet. My point is that there is nothing sentimental here, nothing overstated or hyperbolic. From such a naturalistic perspective, there is also no death wish in this poem ("Now more than ever seems it rich to die" [l. 55]). The poet's final claim is simple. Having heard such a song, and having felt organically connected to such a fellow creature, physical death now seems like less of a curse. Death now feels like part of something greater, even if that greater something is organic and material, like a bird. The bird's song dies away as the poet's voice will soon die away: literally. Organic life expressed through song (a bird's or a poet's) is, we should add, the one thing that most clearly distinguishes both this bird and this poet from the "Cold pastoral" of the Grecian urn.

23. Keats's human pleasure taken from this bird reminds us that science can also be linked to pleasure in a way that connects with the writing of poetry. John Herschel, the nineteenth-century astronomer, described the "great sources of delight" that might be derived from the study of "natural" sciences (Richardson, *Emerson* 123). Likewise, Goldsmith justified his "popularizing" version of natural history - first published in 1774 and running to over twenty editions during the nineteenth century - in terms of its ability to provide pleasure: "Natural History, considered in its utmost extent, comprehends two objects. First, that of discovering, ascertaining, and naming, all the various productions of Nature. Secondly, that of describing the properties, manners, and relations, which they bear to us, and to each other. The first, which is the most difficult part of this science, is systematical, dry, mechanical, and

incomplete. The second is more amusing, exhibits new pictures to the imagination, and improves our relish for existence, by widening the prospect of nature around us. Both, however, are necessary to those who would understand this pleasing science in its utmost extent. . . From seeing and observing the thing itself, he is most naturally led to speculate on its uses, its delights, or its inconveniences" (I, iii). So science is pleasing to the observer or to the participant, nature possesses its own delights, and the elements of nature can provide delight to the natural scientist and to his readers.

24. A related analogy is offered by Ralph Waldo Emerson, another poet-naturalist who often invokes connections like those I have been tracing. Here is Emerson, in his *Notebooks*, describing how language and nature, linked through metaphor, produce pleasure in the observer's imagination: "The metamorphosis of Nature shows itself in nothing more than this, that there is no word in our language that cannot become typical of Nature by giving it emphasis. The world is a Dancer; it is a Rosary; it is a Torrent; it is a Boat; a Mist; a Spider's Snare; it is what you will; and the metaphor will hold, and it will give the imagination keen pleasure. Swifter than light the world converts itself into that thing you name, and all things find their right place under this new and capricious classification" (6:18). Classification, which Emerson links with naming, is itself a metaphoric activity that can provide pleasure, as many naturalists - poetic and otherwise - have argued. We classify living things based on their body parts (mammalia), their legs (insects have six), or their sex organs (usually stamens and pistils in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), but the principle is always metaphoric: what seems like something else, what looks like something else, what reminds us of something, or someone, else. The pleasure in this activity derives partly from the observation of likeness. I see that my love is like a red, red rose, and my sudden sense of similarity gives me pleasure. I see that a spider is like a lobster but not like a jellyfish. I see that a lion is more like a lamb than it is like a lammergeyer (bird). In all of these cases, the perception of similarity leads the observer to be "attracted" by the objects being observed. Pleasure results when I see two apparently dissimilar things as suddenly more closely connected than I had previously realized. The result might be science: oh look, that lobster reminds me of a spider. I should describe this spider anatomically and physiologically. Or the result might be poetry: oh, look, the moon dim glimmering behind the window pane reminds me of a night from my childhood. I should write a poem.

25. Coleridge, from whom I take my moon image, also understands that "poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood" (*Anima Poetae* 5). This sentiment of Coleridge's is also true for much of nature as described in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it is only generally and not perfectly understood. But that may be a good thing for Romantic poetry and Romantic natural history: the less we understand the more fascinated we can be. In this regard consider Emerson again: "The instincts of the ant are very unimportant considered as the ant's; but the moment a ray of relation is seen to extend from it to man, and the little drudge is seen to be a monitor, a little body with a mighty heart, then all its habits, even that said to be recently observed, that it never sleeps, become sublime" (*Nature* 36). This sense of the value of things that are not understood helps to explain the precipitous decline in nature poetry during the early Modernist years of the twentieth century (Edward Thomas is the exception), when science seemed for a time to have explained away the mysteries of biological process. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, when ecology and biochemistry were both being revealed to be much more complex than had previously been imagined, a flurry of nature poetry and nature writing began again.

26. Onno Oerlemans has recently written that "Romantic depictions of animals force us to acknowledge that animals are a kind of life in nature that is at once much like our own, and which is yet different from it, not capable of being reduced to merely human designs or desires" (4). I would like to extend his argument beyond animals to all of animate creation. Oerlemans criticizes anthropocentric forms of criticism that produce only anthropocentric readings of Romantic writers. He argues, instead, that Romantic representations of animals make us "recognize the wider boundaries of life." Such an

argument is not just politically correct eco-criticism. On the contrary, it suggests that the Romantic writers can help us toward a sense of lives beyond our own lives, a sense of other beings and other forms of life that we did not culturally construct and that do not merely reflect our personal points of view. I should add that we do not need a Judeo-Christian concept of deity or ethics to make such a nonhuman world work. My sympathy for living things can be based, as many eighteenth-century thinkers would remind us, on my "internal constitution," on my organic relation to the innumerable forms of life around me.[3]

27. Let me end with Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the man who would put all this talk about pleasure to rest for a century or so, but only until we realized that pleasure, like love, might be a process of brains and organic molecules rather than a process of "minds" or "souls." Here is Erasmus Darwin linking you and me intimately to ants (which he calls "emmets") and worms:

    With ceaseless change, how restless atoms pass,
    From life to life, a transmigrating mass;
    How the same organs, which to day compose
    The poisonous henbane, or the fragrant rose,
    May, with to morrow's sun, new forms compile,
    Frown in the Hero, in the Beauty smile.
    Whence drew the enlighten'd Sage, the moral plan,
    [That] man should ever be the friend of man;
    Should eye with tenderness all living forms,
    His brother-emmets, and his sister-worms.
    (*Temple of Nature*, IV, 419-28)

    A world full of animate creatures described in terms of their ability to feel pleasure or bestow pleasure on other parts of nature. A world of living things bound together by forces that act and react on all of them in similar ways. A biological world shot through with the possibility of pleasing or being pleased, at once interrelated and interdependent. Not such a bad idea after all.

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Notes

1 "Linnaeus's [sexual system of classification] amused some of his contemporaries but scandalized others . . . 'To tell you that nothing could equal the gross prurience of Linnaeus's mind is perfectly needless,' wrote the Rev. Samuel Goodenough, late Bishop of Carlisle, to that devoted Linnaean scholar J. E. Smith in January 1808: 'A literal translation of the first principles of Linnaean botany is enough to shock female modesty'" (Stearn 245). As late as 1820, Goethe worried that women and children should not be exposed to the "dogma of sexuality" in botanical studies (Stern 245). See also Lindroth, who says of Linnaeus: "How close he stands to traditional wedding poetry in the admired opening to the dissertation on the nuptials of flowers . . . The same applies to the actual message of the work, the description of copulation, the nuptials of flowers in matchless bridal beds. With his hot sensuousness the young Linnaeus was as though obsessed with love, the mysterious drive that kept all living things in motion" (10).

2 Darwin discusses "sensitive" plants at great length. He notes that "many vegetables, during the night, do

not seem to respire, but to sleep like the dormant animals and insects in winter. This appears from the mimosa and many other plants closing the upper sides of their leaves together in their sleep" (*Botanic Garden*, "Economy of Vegetation," IV, 127 n.). He also classifies the mimosa in terms of its polygamous behavior: "Mimosa. The sensitive plant. Of the class Polygamy, one house. Naturalists have not explained the immediate cause of the collapsing of the sensitive plant" (*Botanic Garden*, "Loves of the Plants," I, 29 n.). He also comments on a recent plant "lately brought over from the marshes of America" that is even more remarkable: "In the Dionaea Muscipula there is a still more wonderful contrivance to present the depredation of insects; the leaves are armed with long teeth, like the antennae of insects, and lie spread upon the ground round the stem; and are so irritable, that when the insect creeps upon them, they fold up, and crush or pierce it to death" ("Loves of the Plants," I, 19 n.).

3 See Paul Feyerabend, who argues that "works of art are a product of nature, no less than rocks and flowers" and, more importantly for my argument, that "nature itself is an artifact, constructed by scientists and artisans, throughout centuries, from a partly yielding, partly resisting material of unknown properties" (223). Feyerabend's point is not that "nature" is a culturally constructed category, but that anything we say about "nature," any way we represent nature in science or in art is limited by our own sign systems. In this view, he is reminiscent of Goethe: "How difficult it is, though, to refrain from replacing the thing with its sign, to keep the object alive before us instead of killing it with a word" (33). See also Blake: "He who binds to himself a joy / Does the winged life destroy; / But he who kisses the joy as it flies / Lives in eternity's sun rise" ("Eternity" 179). The view expounded by Feyerabend, Goethe, and Blake is confirmed by current theoretical physicists who admit that we do not know even now what "quarks" or "neutrinos" or "muons" really are.

Romanticism & Ecology

Henry Salt on Shelley: Literary Criticism and Ecological Identity

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1. Two key stages in the development of Percy Shelley's posthumous reputation came a half century apart. In 1886, revival of interest in the poet expanded with the publication of Edward Dowden's massive biography and the founding of the Shelley Society. By the mid-1930's, famous and influential critiques of the poet by T.S. Eliot and others felled trees over Shelleyan paths it would take years to clear. What makes these dates remarkable here is how they frame the active career of Henry Stephens Salt (1851-1939), one of Shelley's most perceptive readers and a forerunner, I will argue, of contemporary Ecocriticism. From his first book (*A Shelley Primer*, 1887) to the final chapter of his last (*The Creed of Kinship*, 1935), Salt remained engaged with Shelley's ideas and cited Shelley as a key inspiration for his reformist efforts. Of the nearly forty books Salt wrote, a handful announce themselves as specifically about Shelley: the *Primer*, obviously, plus critical studies of *Julian and Maddalo* and Hogg's *Life of Shelley*, prepared for the Shelley Society. Some of this material became part of the often-reprinted *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer* (1896), which Salt would supplement in later pamphlets like *Shelley as a Pioneer of Humanitarianism* (1902). Though much of Salt's discussion of Shelley's proto-ecological thought takes place in these volumes, others of his works, more resistant to classification, also have Shelley as a shaping force. In *Seventy Years Among Savages* (1921), *The Story of My Cousins* (1923) and *The Creed of Kinship* (1935), the mature Salt combined frequent citations from Shelley's poetry with sections on animal rights, wilderness protection, the fight against corporal punishment in schools, other forms of nonviolent change, and his own autobiography.[1]

2. Salt was born in India in 1851, where his father was a Colonel in the Royal Bengal Artillery. Sent back to England to be educated at Eton (years later his friend G.B. Shaw would write that "Eton was a matter of course in Salt's family"), he went on 's College at the University of Cambridge, where he excelled as a classics scholar. From 1875 to 1884 he returned to Eton in the position of a junior Master, and seemed to have a long and comfortable career ahead of him as a respectable scholar, being waited on in his rooms by many servants and expected to join his fellows at table for a daily feast of beef and other, more exotic meats. But by age 33 he could no longer tolerate the difference between this life and that which was described and imagined in the literature he found increasingly important: classical descriptions of joyous human life when freed from the custom of meat-eating, found in his studies and translations of Plutarch and Ovid; a life of deliberate simplicity as espoused by the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau (then still relatively obscure to British readers); and the combination of awe at the natural world, love for all creatures, and disdain for tyranny in any form that he found in the controversial, misrepresented, and under-appreciated Percy Bysshe Shelley. At the time Shelley was either read as a maker of wispy, ethereal lyrics about Skylarks and Clouds, or not read at all. Remembering his times at Eton, Salt later wrote that "[w]hen I commended Shelley to my Eton colleagues as not only an Etonian and a great poet, but a thinker and a prophet, I got little support" (*Memories* 191). Salt and his wife, Kate Joynes Salt, left Eton and took a cottage in Surrey, about twenty miles from London, where they put in a vegetable garden and lived without servants, a move which shocked their families and fellow Etonians, who had been worried about Salt since he started riding those "horrifying" new bicycles, but didn't imagine that he would so fully reject the life he had been born to. Never a best-selling author, never in the majority in his opinions, Salt nonetheless was a key organizer and articulate spokesperson for a range of movements collected under the name "humanitarian." The word seems to denote only an interest in humans, though Salt and his colleagues consistently used it for animals as well, in the sense that we still use "humane." His most famous book,

which went through several editions, was *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, the most thorough book of its kind until quite recently.[2]

3. With so many books, on such a range of important topics, why does Salt remain obscure? More, why we should care about Salt except as a transitional figure: given the difference between contemporary cultural studies and the pre-professional subjectivity of Salt's method, have not his books, especially on Shelley, been rendered obsolete? With these questions, the issue of Salt's class status matters as well: is it now appropriate, when class along with race and gender are finally central rather than peripheral to literary studies, to champion a respectable Etonian, sixty-years dead, as a contemporary hero? Answers to all three questions are related, and have everything to do with important shifts in the critical understanding of Shelley's works, as well as the disputed role of ecological consciousness within the practice of literary criticism.

4. What has emerged in recent years as Ecocriticism is in many ways quite different from what Salt wrote. Though no consensus need exist as to what Ecocriticism precisely means, in practice it includes any number of historical and philosophical approaches which make the implications of "the natural" central to the discussion of a given text. These discussions go on to investigate how these texts participate in proto-ecological discourse about the role and function of humans in the natural world, not merely to test whether a particular work or author is "green" or not, but rather to discern what can be learned through investigating the ideological uses to which "nature" has been employed. In nearly all cases, this work has sought to bring a more embodied sense back to criticism from the solipsism of post-structuralist theory at its most abstruse. In Shelley studies, the work of such Ecocritics as Timothy Morton, Onno Oerlemans, and Jennifer Lokash complicates our understanding of a poet and essayist whose political and philosophical beliefs cannot be extricated from his positions on natural diet and the limits of anthropocentric thought. In *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste* (1994), Morton went back to Shelley's immediate sources to locate "the poetics of natural diet" within the radical discourse of natural rights central to the revolutionary period. It is because so many people, including otherwise learned and helpful critics, have been predisposed to see vegetarianism like Shelley's as an adolescent affectation and a peripheral interest at best, that the context, implications, and legacy of these beliefs has for so long gone unanalyzed. Before the recent work of Morton and Oerlemans, the only Shelleyan since Salt to write about the importance of Shelley's vegetarianism was Kenneth Neill Cameron in 1950's *The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical*. Morton does make use of Cameron's work in his study; but surprisingly, given that his was the first book in decades to make Shelley's writings on diet a central issue, Morton does not mention Salt, or Shelley's legacy on the reforms of intervening years, at all.[3]

5. Salt's career developed concurrently with debates about the post-Darwinian status of humans in the natural world. Scholars of literature after the Romantic period, such as Gillian Beer, have explored in detail the implications of these debates, providing an historical model for ecologically-minded critics of any era. Salt is a Romantic, in the optimistically generic sense: he has a secular faith in the power of the sympathetic imagination, fueled by a love of the natural world, to change material conditions. But it is in his citation of texts from Romantic period that his work maps the active legacy of Romantic texts onto a later stage of evolutionary science. The following passages, for example, are from 1923's *The Story of My Cousins*, the subtitle of which, *Brief Animal Biographies*, gives a sense of why the word "cranky" often came to be used with Salt. The title comes from a line in ethicist J. Howard Moore's *The Universal Kinship* (1906): "They are not conveniences, but cousins." Salt dedicated this collection of fond stories about animal companions past and present to his late friend from the animal rights movement. The idea of belonging to a family, of recognizing kinship, is deceptively simple but endlessly important to Salt, and appears with increasing devotion throughout his career. Though adoration for domestic animals abounds in this book—"In the early morning she arrives on my bed,

and with a tap of the softest of soft paws upon my face informs me that she is ready to be noticed"(56) —there is a difference in kind between what Salt takes from this feelingful contact and the familiar experience that many pet-lovers have had, especially since the Victorians, where their own animal attains a membership status unrelated to that of animals at large. In the final chapter "What My Cousins Taught Me," these stories prepare the way for Shelley's words to appear in the context of post-Darwinian circumspection:

> It is surprising that so many persons should not only reject but resent the belief in evolution, in a common origin, which to some of us is the one sure consolation, the gospel of great joy. It is a question not of sentiment but of science; yet, as far as sentiment may be permitted, one would have expected human beings to welcome, not disdain, a theory which relieves them of a churlish isolation in a world of slaves and strangers, and leads them gradually to the true civilization which Shelley was inspired to foretell:—
>
> > All things are void of terror: man has lost
> > His terrible prerogative, and stands
> > An equal amidst equals: happiness
> > And science dawn, though late, upon the earth. (*Story* 69)

The lines are from *Queen Mab* (8: 225-8) and follow quickly upon those that Shelley glossed with his note on vegetarianism. "Science" as Shelley uses it here is a strikingly modern addition to a vision of a new Golden Age (Morton's coinage of "Ecotopia" for such aspects of Shelley's vision is apt) and Salt uses the word in similar fashion when he says that he speaks of matters "not of sentiment but of science." If the object of scientific observation is Nature, then what we learn from such study will be healthier than the world created by superstition and tyranny. The loss of an ontologically privileged status for humans, the collapsing of the Great Chain of Being, is only a problem if one has a low opinion of animals. To hold them in high regard, or to acknowledge that they have a standing of their own and a capacity for suffering even before the delineation of species becomes an issue, makes one's role as a member of the animal kingdom anything but a matter for anxiety. Sentiment remains, for Salt, also a fortunate elixir, one that promises companionship with agreeable cousins, some of whom are soft and furry. It is not difficult to construct a less advantageous version of nature than this, even if not "red in tooth and claw." Sentiment exists only in consciousness, and it is our awareness of death, whether the inevitability of our own or the lament for another's, that makes all easy claims for reconciliation with nature so fraught with difficulties. Shelley certainly took terror seriously, and for all his serenity Salt elsewhere writes of the violence in nature quite directly. Some struggles are inevitable, like bringing crops from rocky soil, but the struggle of admitting one's fundamental animalness need not be difficult, and this was Salt's message to his contemporaries. It was an unpopular opinion, of course, and even if Salt's certainty of "great joy" seems gloriously, inaccessibly pre-modern, the investment many of us have—as humans and as humanists—in defining ourselves in opposition to the Animal remains an active issue.

6. Immediately after quoting the previous lines from *Queen Mab*, Salt continues:

> The relation that should exist between mankind and the lower races has been the subject of many controversies [but requires a] 'change of heart,' and when kinship has been not merely argued and demonstrated but felt, any further reasoning will be superfluous; there will be no more need for us to sit in committees and to spend time in contriving release for animals from intolerable wrongs—time that might be more fitly spent in the worship of nature or of art. For when the oneness of life shall be recognized, such practices as blood-sports will be not only childish but impossible; vivisection unthinkable; and the butchery of our fellow-animals for food an outgrown absurdity of the past. (*Story* 69-70)

The confidence here in something like Godwinian perfectibility demonstrates how thoroughly Salt identified his own goals and work with Shelley's: even his other favorite writers—Thoreau, Melville, Richard Jefferies, James Thomson—do not write like this. The lines from *Queen Mab* are not analyzed as they would be in a thematic discussion like *Shelley's Principles* (1892)—Salt does not even name the poem here—but they inspire such a heightened confidence in future progress. Salt enacts Shelley's own statement in the "Preface" to *Prometheus Unbound* that "the great writers of our own age are . . . the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it" (134). Salt's mild complaint about the time he had spent in committee meetings as an officer for the Humanitarian League and the Vegetarian Union—"time that might be more fitly spent in the worship of nature or of art"—itself echoes the wish for the future that Prometheus imagines for himself and Asia in his speech after Hercules unbinds him in Act III of Shelley's drama:

> . . . There is a cave
> All overgrown with trailing odorous plants
> [. . . .] and all around are mossy seats
> And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
> A simple dwelling, which shall be our own,
> Where we will sit and talk of time and change
> As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged—
> [and there shall] visit us the progeny immortal
> Of Painting, Sculpture and rapt Poesy
> And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
> The wandering voices and the shadows these
> Of all that man becomes, the mediators
> Of that best worship, love, by him and us
> Given and returned, swift shapes and sounds which grow
> More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
> And veil by veil evil and error fall . . .
> Such virtue has the cave and place around. (III.iii.10-11, 20-24, 55-63).

Evil and error, put on through custom, keep us from worship. Is Salt's "worship of nature or of art" identical to Prometheus' "that best worship, love"? It is hard to imagine them being very different, though this also demands that we imagine what worship looks like. Is it careful scientific study, like Linnean taxonomy? The writing of poetry? Political action? It seems to be some mindful combination of all of these. The list of abuses at the end of the Salt quotation—vivisection, blood-sports, and butchery—were causes which he knew would not be won overnight, yet the Shelleyan model gave him a rhetoric of hope.

7. The recent work of environmentalist educator Mitchell Thomashow provides a flexible model for understanding Salt's goals as a Shelleyan, a reformer, and a person trying to live in accordance with his ideals. Thomashow calls for greater introspection on the part of those active in the contemporary environmental movement, so that one can guard against reacting with outrage to a particular situation—say, an oil spill—without realizing one's own participation in the culture that creates these situations. In the place of an automatically available, consumerist identity, Thomashow proposes a challenging path towards what he calls "Ecological Identity." The word "identity" signifies both sameness (as in identical objects), as well as the construction of a personality, both of which are ripe for misinterpretation. As Thomashow explains:

> To have an identity crisis is to be lost in the world, lacking the ability (temporarily, one hopes) to connect the self to meaningful objects, people, or ideas—the typical sources of identification . . . . Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe

> themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification . . . . This can entail considerable ambiguity. After all, the nature we are referring to is a social construction, a human concept, varying from culture to culture and person to person. (3)

One of the clusters of concepts Thomashow proposes for developing ecological identity is the study of "ecological identity role models." The term sounds somewhat clumsy out of context, but the evidence he presents of students whose engagement with Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson has led them to ecologically responsible careers in forestry, agriculture, and biochemistry speaks to the power of language to inspire forms of sustainable action.[4] Perhaps his examples also serve to remind teachers of literature that for all the dangers of offering writers to our students as cultural heroes—not the least of which is that all writers are human and therefore imperfect—students do often relate to them in this way, and occasionally with wonderful results. In Salt's case, he identified his goals for the increase of human sympathy and kinship with other forms of life with what he read in Shelley; his path of ecological identity further led him to create a way of life in accordance with his beliefs, following the enthusiasm for "the simple life" he responded to in Edward Carpenter and William Morris.[5] Though this essay is clearly written in approval of such a marriage of life and work, the contrast between Salt's work and the standard for literary commentary as practiced in this era of professional criticism could hardly be greater. The historical intersection of T.S. Eliot's critiques of Shelley and the writings of Salt's later career form a pivotal juncture in the removal of ecological identity from critical discourse.

8. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), Eliot distinguished three stages in the development of taste in poetry. The first is shared by "the majority of children," up to age twelve or so (32). Eliot does not name any poets in this category; presumably he means the enjoyment of nursery rhymes and poetic rhythm. Next, "the usual adolescent course with Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rosetti, Swinburne."(33) For himself, this stage went until age nineteen, but "it is one beyond which I dare say many people never advance; so that such taste for poetry as they retain in later life is only a sentimental memory of the pleasures of youth" (33-34). The third stage, from which he now speaks, is where "identity" becomes a negative term:

> The third, or mature stage of enjoyment of poetry, comes when we cease to identify ourselves with the poet we happen to be reading; when our critical faculties remain awake; when we are aware of what one poet can be expected to give and what he cannot. The poem has its own existence, apart from us; it was there before us and will endure after us. It is only at this stage that the reader is prepared to distinguish between degrees of greatness in poetry[.] (34)

If we imagine the word "nature" in place of "poem" here, then the concept of objective individuality which Eliot presupposes comes into focus. Reading a poem, in this view, is like looking at a landscape, which one visits on expert advice. Other ways of experiencing the natural world, where one acknowledges one's own dependence upon a particular ecosystem, are not possible. Of course, we change our surroundings and are changed by them; poems, I would argue, operate on the mind in a similar way: we are not the same observer after the experience of living with a poem as we were before. If we were objective, then the experience could hardly seem to matter, would touch us only on the surface or not at all. The ultimate goal of reading in Eliot's description here is the apprehension of true greatness. Our individual self, salient though we might imagine it to be, witnesses the external reality of the poem; if great, the old poem "shall endure after us," not unlike we hope the cycles of nature will. Paradoxically, the same tribute to the endurance of Art which Eliot proclaims here—and which seems incompatible with "ecological identity"—also propels Shelley's confidence in the lines

cited above from the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* about the enduring and nourishing effects of great writers on future generations. In the end, though, Eliot's imperative that one equate "critical faculties" with the careful excision of indulgent subjectivity became the sine qua non of serious criticism for most of the ensuing decades.

9. But the practice of objectively responding to poems—for all these concerns an important and enabling skill—effectively transformed over time into a kind of antagonism between critic and artist, and ultimately the implicit view that the critic's objective understanding was superior to that of the subjective artist. The best and clearest Ecocriticism attempts to reverse this trend. For example, Jonathan Bate begins his *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991) with a brief history of Wordsworth criticism up to the present moment, then states his unorthodox conviction that where "the critic's purposes are also the writer's . . . there can be a communion between living reader and dead writer which may bring with it a particular enjoyment and a perception about endurance" (5). Such a confident and accessible statement makes it clear why Bate's book instantly became a classic of the contemporary Ecocritical movement.[6] The notably "non-communal" approaches of immediate concern to Bate included certain New Historicist and deconstructivist criticism, and these developments are obviously subsequent to Eliot. Yet the debate over when agreement between the commentator and primary writer transgresses into irresponsibility unfolds along comparable lines both in our moment and in Salt's.

10. Besides relegating Shelley—along with Byron and Keats—to a merely "adolescent" interest, additional comments of Eliot's on Shelley reveal exactly how deeply his disapprobation was rooted in matters of animal rights and ecological identity. Defending the canonical importance of Shelley's poetry against Eliot's attacks is a *fait accompli*, of course, but our attention to the precise terms of these famous attacks can be fruitfully understood in terms of the disgust that Shelley's vegetarianism engendered in Eliot. In the lecture on "Shelley and Keats" in *The Use of Poetry*, Eliot remarked that

    > With Shelley we are struck from the beginning by the number of things poetry is expected to do; from a poet who tells us, in a note on vegetarianism, that 'the orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and the number of his teeth', we shall not know what to expect. The notes to *Queen Mab* express, it is true, only the views of an intelligent and enthusiastic schoolboy, but a schoolboy who knows how to write; and throughout his work, which is of no small bulk for a short life, he does not, I think, let us forget that he took his ideas seriously. The ideas of Shelley seem to me always to be the ideas of adolescence—as there is every reason why they should be. And an enthusiasm for Shelley seems to me also to be an affair of adolescence: for most of us, Shelley has marked an intense period before maturity, but for how many does Shelley remain the companion of age? I confess that I never open the volume of his poems simply because I want to read poetry, but only with some special reason for reference. I find his ideas repellent; and the difficulty of separating Shelley from his ideas and beliefs is still greater than with Wordsworth. (88-89)

    Eliot is rather vague on the "ideas" he finds so repellent: the subsequent mention of how Shelley was "sometimes almost a blackguard" (89) seems to indicate a concern he shared with many readers about Shelley's views on marriage and his treatment of Harriet, although this comment is not developed. Vegetarianism is named, however, and its connotations of "adolescence" continue to have cultural currency. If the other Shelleyan ideas he found repellent included those which Salt enumerated in *Shelley's Principles*—disdain for tyranny of all sorts, whether of one class of humans over another, or of humans over other forms of life—then the maturity which Eliot commends painfully resembles the withered sensibility depicted in *Gerontion*: "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season."

11. Eliot gave this talk in February of 1933; at that point Salt was eighty-two and had been writing about and returning to Shelley's poetry for fifty years. The book Salt was preparing would be his last, and in the title *The Creed of Kinship* he compressed the themes of his life and work into a succinct principle of the oneness of life. It is a short and strange autobiography, for his life story is told through the causes he worked for, the friends (some of them famous) who enriched his life, and the writers from Lucretius to Shaw who had been his intellectual company. All of this is developed without any personal details about his marriage, childhood, or other matters which have since become the core of modern memoir. The book deserves a wider audience: often when we hear someone express opinions held dear for half a century calcification has long since set in; but when those positions have been held on principle against outrage and hostility they can take on the grandeur of a painter's late style, and to me the book reads like the last canvasses of Titian and O'Keeffe. The final chapter, "One Who Understood," is a condensed version of all of Salt's writings about Shelley. Though I think he overstates the uniformity of Shelley's writings about animals, Salt's perception of how crucially interested Shelley was in the recognition by humans of both our animal nature and the need to use our power responsibly stands in marked contrast to virtually all other discussions of the poet:

    > There is nothing in [Shelley] more delightful than the utter absence of the 'superior person' (would that the same could be said of many of his critics!), both as regards his human and non-human fellow-beings. Whenever he speaks of animals, it is with an instinctive, childlike, and perfectly natural sense of kinship and brotherhood. Thus in *Alastor*, in the invocation of Nature [lines 13-15], we find him saying:
    >
    > > 'If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
    > > I consciously have injured, but still loved
    > > And cherished these my kindred.'
    >
    > My kindred! Perhaps no feature of his philosophy has been more often ridiculed than his vegetarianism; yet here, too, he gave proof not only of personal humaneness but of practical foresight, for food-reform is now widely recognised as a necessary part of any well-considered scheme for humanising our relation toward the animals, and everyone who deals with the question of animals' rights is compelled to take some note of it. Alone among the poets of his generation, he was unwilling to sentimentalise about the beauty of kindness to animals, and at the same time 'to slay the lamb that looks him in the face,' or, what is no less immoral, to devolve that unpleasant process on another person. (*Creed* 114-115)

    In tone this resembles much of the breathless enthusiasm for Shelley among his apologists from the Victorians to Andre Maurois, but in its emphasis on Shelley's ideas in their historical context it is different in kind. Salt does not present an angelic Shelley, altogether lyrical and impractical, "not one of us"; but rather a poet who has anticipated issues which will remain challenging and controversial long after immediate concerns have been resolved. This kind of commentary distinguishes Salt's writings on Shelley even from those of other champions whose works first appeared in the late-nineteenth century. William E. Axon's *Shelley's Vegetarianism* (1891), for example, is a compendium of citations from *Queen Mab*, *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and the two prose essays of 1813-14, but with very little discussion: enlightening for those who did not know about this aspect of Shelley, but adding very little to the historical understanding of a familiar reader. It is the kind of book that *can* be replaced by studies which examine the same passages in far more detail: readers of Morton's recent book are well beyond needing Axon. Salt, however, is up to something else, and his concerns went underground, in a sense, until the recent development of franker versions of autobiographical criticism.

12. Whether breathless or not, the attitudes described above by Salt have become fairly mainstream, and to

the growing number of urbane new vegetarian readers the "ridicule" experienced by Salt in his time might seem surprising. This is where what Carol J. Adams has called "the sexual politics of meat" bears on the history of responses to Shelley:

> People with power have always eaten meat. The aristocracy of Europe consumed large courses filled with every kind of meat while the laborer consumed the complex carbohydrates. Dietary habits proclaim class distinctions, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well. Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat. The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinctions with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity. (Adams 26)

In Adams's analysis, attempts to dismiss the claims of vegetarians for the reduction of a meat-based diet—whether these claims are based on health concerns, the moral status of animals, or environmental destruction—inevitably participate in the reinscription of patriarchal power. The terms used in the "ridicule" of Shelley's vegetarianism are usually couched in terms of its unmanliness: either because it is feminized or, as we have already seen, "adolescent." I return to T.S. Eliot for further illustration, perhaps unfairly; yet because his influence was so formative, at least well into the 1960s, the diction of Eliot's derision remains essential:

> [S]ome of Shelley's views I positively dislike, and that hampers my enjoyment of the poems in which they occur; and others seem to me so puerile that I cannot enjoy the poems in which they occur . . . . [It] is not the presentation of beliefs which I do not hold, or—to put the case as extremely as possible—of beliefs that excite my abhorrence, that makes the difficulty. Still less is it that Shelley is deliberately making use of his poetic gifts to propagate a doctrine; for Dante and Lucretius did the same thing. I suggest that the position is somewhat as follows. When the doctrine, theory, belief, or 'view of life' presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and found on the facts of experience, in interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate. When it is one which the reader *rejects as childish or feeble*, it may, for a reader of well-developed mind, set up an almost complete check (91, 96; emphasis added).

Because the only belief which Eliot names in his essay concerns Shelley's vegetarianism (though he almost certainly means those on marriage, too), the anti-masculine words *puerile, childish*, and *feeble* reveal a culturally-endorsed hostility toward these beliefs. These terms resemble those used to patronize idealistic people of any era, including many currently involved in the environmental movement accused of intuiting an overly gentle view of nature. "Resist not the weakness / Such strength is in meekness" goes the Song of Spirits in *Prometheus Unbound* (II.iii.93-4), and this message of humility might make resistance to available forms of violence and acquisitiveness sustainable over a long and healthy life.

13. Ecological criticism, in its contemporary development, has come to include a variety of autobiographical approaches, most of which are written without Salt's characteristic reserve. Though Adams's feminist understanding of vegetarian discourse concurs with my argument about the cultural imperatives that kept Salt's beliefs unpopular and his works obscure, one could make a convincing case from feminist and Ecofeminist perspectives that Salt's nonetheless Victorian and upper-class reserve limits his contemporary importance as a model for Ecocriticism or for creative autobiography. Salt, after all, chose to live a simple life, without servants: most people have to. More, he never wrote about Kate, his wife, who Shaw used as the model for his *Candida* and later outed as a lesbian who lived with

her husband as a like-minded intellectual companion. I think the important question is whether Salt's class position functioned as a prerequisite to his beliefs. Not having to earn his living by writing certainly enabled him to develop his interests in subjects then unpopular, but it does not negate the selfless devotion in which he found his life's meaning. It is never difficult—in Salt's time or our own—to find evidence to discourage pacifists and other reformers, but one thing we *can* celebrate in our time is the expansion of education and access to critical discussion far beyond the enclaves of male privilege in which Salt was first trained. Scholars developing a critical method answerable to the demands of a world in crisis should consider the history of criticism in this century, and its deliberate exclusion of earlier, effusive writers like Salt. Even among Shelleyans, Salt is rarely mentioned, despite his thorough knowledge of Shelley's works and clear discussions and translations of his classical sources, perhaps because we are trained to expect critics to be a specialist in one subject only, not committed to many.

14. This essay is not meant as a call for merely affective standards of inclusion in literary discussion: in Shelley studies, the need for consistently edited texts and skillful winnowing of a forest of impassioned secondary works is as essential to advancing our understanding of Shelley as it is for any other author. All who love the poems are grateful for this ongoing work. As critical discussion has become more specialized, the effort to be inclusive of students and non-professional readers also becomes a priority, and in this sense writings from the era we now call pre-professional offer old yet relevant models, like good gardening advice that never quite goes out of style. This approach to critical work requires not the slightest lapse in sophistication, and perhaps makes possible a greater elegance than what has become all-too-standard practice. The many versions of practices in contemporary Ecocriticism include a variety of autobiographical approaches that recall and resuscitate the best of Salt. A book like John Elder's *Reading the Mountains of Home* (1998) is representative of this trend, although such a nuanced and satisfying work as this is never "typical" of anything. In it, Elder combines an examination of the geological history of the Vermont country near his home with stories of his family, particularly the challenges and rewards of raising his teenage son. The book is structured around a series of walks taken in this area over the course of a year, and his interpretive guidebook is Robert Frost's long poem "Directive." The volume and acuity of Elder's insights on Frost make this one of the finest critical discussions of Frost since the pathclearing work of Louis Untermeyer, but is it literary criticism, exactly, and how should it be catalogued? Such a question at this stage in the ongoing process of "redrawing the boundaries" of cultural studies invites us to revisit the moment when arguments for the exacting, quantifiable practice of literary studies were first perceived as necessary to defend the status of modern literature in the university. Henry Salt was not objective; he wrote to praise or blame; and praise came more naturally to his disposition. But he did not hold his opinions about poetry or about the kinship of humans with other forms of life *a priori*; his half-century of writing about Shelley chronicles the extent to which the poetry had become a part of his inner life; the pressed in the poetry became part of his ecological identity. For Salt to analyze Shelley dispassionately, to engage with challenging ideas in his works and then fail to proceed on a course of reform and hopeful progress, would have been wholly inadequate to the experience of allowing himself to be so available to poetry's power. Whether one agrees with all that Salt stood for, or whether Percy Shelley is the poet to accompany one on such a sustained engagement, there remains something fundamentally sane about this way of talking about poetry, especially poetry which exists to inspire. Such a belief, taken to its logical extreme, opens literary studies to a number of charges: impressionism, associative reasoning, lack of reproducible method: but there will always be those who misuse an approach. One of the pleasures of literary study is finding deserving work whose audience didn't exist when it was first written, but later comes into being. Such we are now, through our shared and enduring attention to Percy Shelley, for Henry Salt.

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Notes

1 Two biographical studies of Salt exist, the most reliable being George Hendrick's *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters* (1977). This work seeks to introduce Salt to new readers, a task which is unfortunately still necessary. Hendrick also reprints a number of unpublished letters written by and addressed to Salt. Stephen Winsten's *Salt and His Circle* (1951) is made and marred by its association with G.B. Shaw, who wrote a preface for it at age 95 (!) and provided other materials in remembrance of his friend. Winsten's penchant for imagined dialogue and undocumented conjecture makes one appreciate the obsessive answerability of the best modern biographies.

2 See Walters and Portmess's *Ethical Vegetarianism: From Pythagoras to Peter Singer* for a long-overdue anthology that brings Salt's "The Humanities of Diet" (1914) back into print. This book also features a large section of Shelley's *Vindication of Natural Diet* after a selection of his classical sources.

3 Morton does, however, consider Shelley's importance for later aspects of the environmental movement, especially in "Shelley's Green Desert." Onno Oerlemans, in "Shelley's Ideal Body: Vegetarianism and Nature," helpfully discusses both Cameron's exceptionality as a biographer who takes diet seriously, and names Salt as the only serious defender of Shelley's vegetarianism (532).

4 Thomashow's historical tracings of "Trees of Environmentalism" (see chart on 26) shares with much American environmental writing a foreshortened sense of history, with Thoreau and Muir as the deep roots of the tree. Are Wordsworth, Clare, and Darwin then soil?

5 Morris certainly shared many of Salt's ideals, but asked crucial questions about the claims of the vegetarian movement: "Simplicity in life is good, most good, so long as it is voluntary; but surely there is enough involuntary simplification of life. To live poorly is no remedy against poverty but a necessity of it. If our whole system were to become vegetarian altogether the poor would be forced to live on vegetarian cag-mag, while the rich lived on vegetarian dainties" (qtd in Winsten 94).

6 For a response to this passage in full disagreement with Bate's thesis as well as that of this essay see P.M.S. Dawson's "'The Empire of Man': Shelley and Ecology," in Bennett and Curran 232-239.

Romanticism & Ecology

Wordsworth's "The Haunted Tree" and the Sexual Politics of Landscape

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1. In 1819 Wordsworth began to write a short poem that he published in 1820. He called it "The Haunted Tree." Unusual within his corpus in that it is fancifully mythological and playfully erotic, this poem is nevertheless an evocation of a particular oak-tree in the familiar landscape of Rydal Park, Grasmere.[1] Wordsworth dwells upon the tree in a manner that links the poem to "The Thorn" and to the poems on the naming of places. The poem is part of a kind of arboreal sub-genre within Wordsworth's nature verse and continues the modification of the eighteenth-century Georgic he had previously made in "Yew-Trees" and *The Excursion*.

2. Here is the text of the poem:

> Those silver clouds collected round the sun
> His mid-day warmth abate not, seeming less
> To overshade than multiply his beams
> By soft reflection—grateful to the sky,
> To rocks, fields, woods. Nor doth our human sense
> Ask, for its pleasure, screen or canopy
> More ample than the time-dismantled Oak
> Spreads o'er this tuft of heath, which now, attired
> In the whole fulness of its bloom, affords
> Couch beautiful as e'er for earthly use
> Was fashioned; whether by the hand of Art,
> That eastern Sultan, amid flowers enwrought
> On silken tissue, might diffuse his limbs
> In languor; or, by Nature, for repose
> Of panting Wood-nymph, wearied with the chase.
> O Lady! fairer in thy Poet's sight
> Than fairest spiritual creature of the groves,
> Approach;—and, thus invited, crown with rest
> The noon-tide hour: though truly some there are
> Whose footsteps superstitiously avoid
> This venerable Tree; for, when the wind
> Blows keenly, it sends forth a creaking sound
> (Above the general roar of woods and crags)
> Distinctly heard from far—a doleful note!
> As if (so Grecian shepherds would have deemed)
> The Hamadryad, pent within, bewailed
> Some bitter wrong. Nor it is unbelieved,
> By ruder fancy, that a troubled ghost
> Haunts the old trunk; lamenting deeds of which
> The flowery ground is conscious. But no wind
> Sweeps now along this elevated ridge;
> Not even a zephyr stirs;—the obnoxious Tree
> Is mute; and, in his silence, would look down,

O lovely Wanderer of the trackless hills,
On thy reclining form with more delight
Than his coevals in the sheltered vale
Seem to participate, the while they view
Their own far-stretching arms and leafy heads
Vividly pictured in some glassy pool,
That, for a brief space, checks the hurrying stream!
(Wordsworth 291)

That "The Haunted Tree" has been unjustly neglected by critics is surprising, since it alludes to a number of poems that have been regarded as icons of high Romanticism—poems by Coleridge as well as by Wordsworth himself. It continues the debate about nature, the feminine, love and inspiration begun in "Dejection" and the "Immortality" ode. And it introduces into that debate quiet topical reference to some of the most fundamental social issues and fashionable literary trends of Regency Britain. In this essay I shall try to rectify critical neglect of the poem by examining it in detail, arguing that we need to read it—like much of Wordsworth's later poetry—as an intelligent and witty, if oblique, contribution to contemporary political and social debate, a contribution more and not less pertinent in its choice of a mythologized English nature as its setting.

3. In the nineteen eighties, a number of critics suggested that Wordsworth's nature poetry is a flight from political issues into the sublime area of his own subjectivity—that it reveals a loss of faith in political and social argument. For Marjorie Levinson it is an "evasion," for Alan Liu a "denial," of history.[2] The concept of "displacement"—originally Raymond Williams's but revived by David Simpson—is more subtle but still, I shall argue, not wholly adequate as a formulation of Wordsworth's poetic relationship with the political and social issues of the early nineteenth century since it presumes that landscape functions as a secondary stage on which issues that arose elsewhere can be depicted in controlled form (Simpson 15-20).

4. Answering these charges that Wordsworthian nature was an "evasion" or "denial" of history, Jonathan Bate argued that the depiction of nature in *The Prelude* amounted to a "green politics" and a Romantic ecology of particular relevance at the present historical moment of advanced despoliation of the earth's most vital elements. Bate's intervention reminded us that nature was—and is—political. But as an answer to Levinson, Liu and Simpson, and even as a reading of Wordsworth per se, it was itself open to accusations of nostalgia and pastoralism, for it placed the Romantics at the start of a tradition of nature conservancy in Britain that many see as class-bound and politically conservative—a survival of the values of the country gentry and aristocracy by means of the institutionalized National Trust. Since the publication of Bate's *Romantic Ecology*, however, a number of scholars have presented a more historically detailed version of Wordsworth's involvement with and influence upon "green" politics, natural science and environmental movements (1-35). Michael Wiley has reconstructed the complex ways in which natural space was understood by early nineteenth-century geographers. He has suggested that Wordsworth's poetic organization of the prospect-view was shaped by surveyors who began to map the Lake District. Robin Jarvis, meanwhile, has restored to view the varied cultural and political significances of rural walking in the period. I myself have examined the ways in which nature-description advanced views about class and gender, and was understood to do so, as has Jacqueline Labbe (Fulford, "Landscape," and "Romanticism"). Most helpfully, the work of geographers Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins has correlated the aesthetics of the picturesque with the practical management of nature on estate-farms. As a result, the landscape of Romantic-period Britain, and the views presented of that landscape, are better understood than before. What—if anything—it meant to be "green" in Wordsworth's Britain is a question we are now much better placed to answer.

5. "The Haunted Tree" contains a vision of men and women living in harmony in an unspoilt nature. It is,

to all appearances, a "green" poem, in Bate's sense, because it discovers social community in a landscape of peace. The ground is not raped, the soil not exploited—and neither are the people who live close to it. And this balance between humans and the natural environment that they have nurtured is explicitly opposed to other, exploitative, kinds of relationship both within human society and between humans and nature.

6. But Wordsworth's "green politics" were not, pacé Bate, to do with equality, liberty or commonwealth. Not by 1819, anyway. "The Haunted Tree" may endorse an ecological balance, but it conceives that balance in terms of traditionalist and hierarchical eighteenth-century models—models that presume the continuing social and political inferiority of rural laborers and of women. Wordsworth's "green" England is a conservative and unequal place, a place in which order and continuity come before liberty and change. It is a place in which Edmund Burke's thought is deeply rooted.

7. In Wordsworth's Britain ownership of land was still a fundamental political issue: the gentry's and nobility's possession of it was used to justify their domination of parliament, whilst laborers" (and women's) lack of it was used to explain their poverty and disenfranchizement. The politics of landscape, in other words, were parliamentary politics too. They were also sexual politics: for Burkeian traditionalists it was the duty of those given authority by landownership to shelter vulnerable women. "The Haunted Tree" updates the (sexual) politics of landscape found in Burke and in the eighteenth-century tradition in which political arguments were advanced by use of nature imagery—in particular by the iconographical use of trees. At the same time it intervenes in the debate (stimulated by Burke) about gender and sexual roles that reached fever pitch in 1819-20. That debate was fuelled by Byron's Orientalist poetry, in particular the newly published *Don Juan*, and by the attack upon him made by Wordsworth's friend the Poet Laureate Southey. The debate was accompanied by a political crisis, with revolution widely expected, when George IV caused Lord Liverpool's administration to have his wife, Caroline, "tried" before the House of Lords in an attempt to show that she was unfit, on the grounds of her sexual immorality, to become Queen.

8. I begin by examining the use made of landscape-imagery in political argument. Both radical opponents and conservative defenders of Britain's unreformed constitution employed nature-imagery to render their arguments appealing. Trees figured prominently in that imagery after John Locke had used the oak to illustrate organic unity.[3] Oaks' longevity, rootedness and strength made them suitable emblems for writers who portrayed an ancient constitution secured in the heritable property of land and capable of gradual change as a growth of English soil.[4] Edmund Burke depicted Britain's form of government as tree-like, of ancient growth: it "moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation and progression" in "the method of nature" ("Reflections" 120). The people were "great cattle reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak" (181). Burke was opposed by Thomas Paine and other radicals who employed the political iconography of the French Revolution, in which the Liberty tree was an emblem of the new growth possible once ancient injustices had been uprooted. Like an oak Burke's constitution was rooted in the land, time honored, slow to change and grow, protective of the subjects who sheltered beneath it. Wordsworth characterized Burke himself as a tree, acknowledging the power of his symbolic oak as an anti-revolutionary naturalization of conservative politics:

> I see him,—old, but vigorous in age,
> Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start
> Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe
> The younger brethren of the grove . . .
> While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
> Against all systems built on abstract rights,
> Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims

Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
Declares the vital power of social ties
Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
Exploding upstart Theory, insists
Upon the allegiance to which men are born.
(The Prelude, VII.519-30)

Wordsworth wrote this tribute when a political supporter of his patron, the Tory landowner and political magnate Lord Lowther.

9. Landowners and conservative moralists exploited the political symbolism of trees in an attempt to show liberty to be more truly rooted in the British constitution than in the French Revolution. Uvedale Price, the Whig squire and theorist of the picturesque, put such ideas into practice. He designed his estate at Foxley as a display of paternalism. Cottagers were not cleared from his park but included within it, their rustic dwellings sheltered by the oak and ash woods which Price spent much of his time and income maintaining and planting. His tenants were visibly under his protection in a symbolic ordering of the real landscape which emphasized that order and liberty depended upon the mutual duties owed by rich and poor. Wordsworth corresponded with Price and visited Foxley, without entirely approving of the landscape park (William and Dorothy Wordsworth I: 506).

10. Price's fellow theorist Richard Payne Knight, also a Herefordshire Whig squire, both planted oaks and poeticized about their political significance. He portrayed the oak tree as a symbol of a constitutional British monarch paternally sheltering lesser trees grouped around it: "Then Britain's genius to thy aid invoke / And spread around the rich, high-clustering oak: / King of the woods!" The cedar by contrast was shown to be "like some great eastern king", destroying everything in its shade, "Secure and shelter'd, every subject lies; / But, robb'd of moisture, sickens, droops, and dies" (V.61-63; V.111-20).

11. Wordsworth's "The Haunted Tree" depicts the oak in a similar way. His tree is an image of the English gentry's authority, rooted, paternalist, like Burke's tree-like constitution. Like Knight, Wordsworth opposes his English tree to an Oriental monarch—to a Sultan—a standard figure of political and sexual despotism:

Nor doth our human sense
Ask, for its pleasure, screen or canopy
More ample than the time-dismantled Oak
Spreads o'er this tuft of heath, which now, attired
In the whole fulness of its bloom, affords
Couch beautiful as e'er for earthly use
Was fashioned; whether by the hand of Art,
That eastern Sultan, amid flowers enwrought
On silken tissue, might diffuse his limbs
In languor; or, by Nature, for repose
Of panting Wood-nymph, wearied with the chase.
(lines 1-15)

The phrase "time-dismantled oak" alludes to Cowper's poem "Yardley Oak" in which the aged tree is made a symbol of Britain's ancient constitution, a constitution so deeply rooted in the past that, like the landed gentry on whose estates oaks grew, it should offer stability (III.77-83).[5] Wordsworth had borrowed from Cowper's poem before, in "Yew-Trees" and *The Excursion*[6]: there as here Wordsworth's oaks, like Cowper's, are not just English trees but trees of Englishness—or rather icons of a conservative and anti-revolutionary identification of national unity with the landed gentry and the 1688

constitutional settlement. Similarly Southey, admirer of Burke and editor of Cowper, claimed the order of the nation to depend on men "whose names and families are older in the country than the old oaks upon their estates" (I.11-12).

12. The politics of "The Haunted Tree" are more complex than are Southey's Tory polemics. Wordsworth examines, when Southey does not, the power relations implicit in the Burkeian model of authority. He shows these power relations to be constructed upon sexual oppositions. His oak is a sublime male sheltering a beautiful female, whose presence tempers and mollifies his masculine authority: it "affords / Couch beautiful" for the Lady of the poem. Burke had understood political authority in these terms: Caesar, in Burke's discussion of the sublime, had achieved political power by combining the awe-inspiring masculinity of the warrior with attractive feminine qualities ("Philosophical Enquiry" 111). The man of sublime authority had, furthermore, a duty to protect the vulnerable and weak (170-71). Wordsworth's poem sexualizes nature in similar terms: masculinity is awe-inspiring and sublime, femininity tender and beautiful. It places this gendering of power, adapted from Burke, against a potentially aggressive masculinity whose power is that of unsocialized self-assertion, threatening rape. Burkeian paternal masculinity, tempered by the feminine, confronts the Oriental Sultan, a figure of Eastern political and sexual despotism. The paternal authority that the Burkeian oak symbolizes is "dismantled" by age and tempered by the beautiful. It is protective rather than subordinative, traditional and rooted rather than aggressive and despotic.

13. There was a political context for the poem, not immediately apparent today. In July 1819 the first two cantos of Byron's *Don Juan* were published. To Wordsworth their licentious wit and sexual theme were dangerously corrupting. In a letter of January 1820 he called Don Juan "that infamous publication" and referred to the "despicable quality of the powers requisite for [its] production," adding "I am persuaded that *Don Juan* will do more harm to the English character, than anything of our time; not so much as a Book;—But thousands who would be afraid to have it in that shape, will batten upon choice bits of it in the shape of Extracts." He bemoaned the fact that the close association of its editor with Byron had prevented the *Quarterly Review* from defending the threatened "English character": "every true-born Englishman will regard the pretension of the Review to the character of a faithful defender of the Institutions of the country, as *hollow*" (William and Dorothy Wordsworth II: 579).

14. In *Don Juan*, as in the earlier *Bride of Abydos*, Byron was widely thought to have poeticized his own sexual history. He used Oriental figures to image himself as one who preferred sexual conquest to Wordsworthian solitude-in-nature: "By solitude I mean a Sultan's (not / A Hermit's), with a haram for a grot" ("Poetical Works," *Don Juan* I.87). He had also portrayed Orientalism as "the only poetical policy" guaranteed to achieve commercial success, as an undemanding literary trend ("Letters and Journals" II: 68):

> Oh that I had the art of easy writing
> What should be easy reading! could I scale
> Parnassus, where the Muses sit inditing
> Those pretty poems never known to fail,
> How quickly would I print (the world delighting)
> A Grecian, Syrian or Assyrian tale;
> And sell you, mix'd with western sentimentalism,
> Some samples of the finest Orientalism!
> ("Poetical Works," *Beppo* 51)

Byron's Orientalist poetry portrayed English character and institutions as repressive and tame; similarly, the publication of his verses on his own failed marriage suggested that he saw poetry as a means of publicly declaring his own personal refusal to be bound by such restrictions. Wordsworth was

disgusted by their publication as he was by *Don Juan* not only because their sexual theme threatened his conservative vision of character and society but because they corrupted poetry's rôle as the defender of true-born Englishness.

15. The second canto of *Don Juan* contains an Orientalist erotic fantasy in which the young Juan, washed ashore on an island governed by a pirate, meets the pirate's daughter Haidée "the greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles" "and like a lovely tree" (II.128). Dressed by Haidée in Turkish clothes, Juan becomes the object of her desire and, when her father leaves the island on a voyage:

    > Then came her freedom, for she had no mother,
    > So that, her father being at sea, she was
    > Free as a married woman, or such other
    > Female, as where she likes may freely pass,
    > Without even the encumbrance of a brother,
    > The freest she that ever gazed on glass
    > I speak of Christian lands in this comparison,
    > Where wives, at least, are seldom kept in garrison.
    > (II.175)

    Byron mixed cynical wit about the sexual codes and marital practices of Christian countries with a vision of Juan's and Haidée's sexual encounter as an erotic escape from all paternal and social authority, an escape in which Haidée was also able, as Christian wives were not, openly to admit and act upon her sexual desires:

    > They feared no eyes nor ears on that lone beach;
    > They felt no terrors from the night; they were
    > All in all to each other; though their speech
    > Was broken words, they *thought* a language there, —
    > And all the burning tongues the Passions teach
    > Found in one sigh the best interpreter
    > Of Nature's oracle—first love,—that all
    > Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.
    > (II.189)

    He also, in the first canto, attacked Wordsworth in person as "crazed beyond all hope" (I.205) and parodied his "unintelligible" nature poetry (I.90). And in the dedication verses, which were left unpublished (save as a broadside sold in the streets) Wordsworth was attacked along with Southey as a hireling of the aristocracy. Byron depicted Wordsworth as tedious and reactionary and the Laureate as sexually and poetically impotent, as a harem slave of George and his eunuch ministers—one who would "adore a sultan" and "obey / The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh" (*Dedication* 11). Southey's knowledge of this Orientalist satire on his poetic and political manhood was probably responsible for his 1821 attack upon Byron's "Satanic School" of poetry in the Preface to his funeral ode for George III, the "Vision of Judgement."

16. Wordsworth, like his friend and fellow object of Byron's satire, felt the need to resist Byron's specific attacks and the general example of his Orientalist poetry. For both "Lake poets" Byron's popularity epitomized a worrying tendency in the nation to prefer sensual extravagance over obedience to proper (and usually paternal) authorities and to the poetry that defended them (including their own which continued to be far less popular than Byron's). In 1819 and 1820 this worrying tendency was more than usually evident in the very father of the nation, the monarch. The Prince Regent, who succeeded George III in 1820, had been notoriously extravagant, both sexually and financially, since 1795. In

1816 Wordsworth had declared that "the blame of unnecessary expenditure. . .rests with the Prince Regent" (William and Dorothy Wordsworth II: 334). In 1818 Wordsworth was worried that the Regent's request to Parliament for extra allowances for the other Princes would make it hard for the candidates of the Lowther family to be returned in the election.

17. The Regent's extravagance seemed truly Oriental: he spent £155,000 on adding pagodas, minarets, onion-shaped domes and Indian columns to Brighton Pavilion. Thousands more were spent on interior decoration which made the place resemble a seraglio. Rather than display the paternal restraint of his father, the Prince accrued debts of £335,000 and entertained a succession of mistresses, whilst his estranged wife, Caroline, toured Europe, dressed in fashionable Oriental costumes, having numerous affairs. She returned to England in 1820, and Lord Liverpool's Tory Ministry, acting on the King's instigation, had her "tried" before the House of Lords, attempting to produce enough evidence of her sexual misdemeanors to enable it to deny her the title of "Queen" and the accompanying rights and privileges. The trial caused widespread fears of revolution and caused street protests—a crowd gathered outside the house of the Duke of York viewed Caroline as a victim of George's "Oriental" despotism, shouting "We like princes who show themselves; we don't like Grand Turks who shut themselves up in their seraglio."[7] Radical and labouring-class protest was accompanied by opposition from middle-class women, who clearly understood that the affair had implications for the sexual politics of the nation: an address to the Queen from the "Ladies of Edinburgh," printed in *The Times* on 4th September, noted

    > As your majesty has justly observed, the principles and doctrines now advanced by your accusers do not apply to your case alone, but, if made part of the law of this land, may hereafter be applied as a precedent by every careless and dissipated husband to rid himself of his wife, however good and innocent she may be; and to render his family, however, amiable, illegitimate; thereby destroying the sacred bond of matrimony, and rendering all domestic felicity very uncertain
    > (qtd. in Smith 106).

    Cartoonists portrayed the threat George's actions posed to the family and to the principle of heredity by turning George's penchant for Oriental decoration against him: one depicted him as a Chinese potentate surrounded by his concubines (his mistresses Lady Hertford, Lady Conyngham and Mrs. Quentin)[8]. The affair discredited Lord Liverpool's ministry, who were shown to have prostituted parliament's independence rather than lose their places: they had bribed witnesses against Caroline. Wordsworth attended the last day of the trial in November, having expressed some of the sympathy for her that was widely felt in the country.

18. In those contexts "The Haunted Tree" can be seen as an oblique answer to the Orientalist fashion, and the poetic, political and moral corruption which, for Wordsworth, that fashion manifested at the heart of Regency Britain. It revives and revises a rural rather than metropolitan, Burkeian rather than Byronic understanding of gender, sexuality and power. It attempts to govern desire by defining masculinity as a benevolent paternalism properly protecting women in particular and the land in general. It implicitly rejects Byron's depiction of the Lake poets as worshippers of the Sultan's eunuchs, whilst seeking to provide a more stable (and ostensibly native) model of masculine power than that provided by the "Sultans" George IV and Byron himself.

19. Having outlined the political and aesthetic debates which "The Haunted Tree" addresses I turn now to a detailed close reading of the poem. In the opening lines the threats that characterize the sublime are evoked as possibilities, but are soon banished by the actual scene:

    > Those silver clouds collected round the sun

His mid-day warmth abate not, seeming less
To overshade than multiply his beams
By soft reflection—grateful to the sky,
To rocks, fields, woods. Nor doth our human sense
Ask, for its pleasure, screen or canopy
More ample than the time-dismantled Oak
Spreads o'er this tuft of heath, which now, attired
In the whole fulness of its bloom, affords
Couch beautiful as e'er for earthly use
Was fashioned; whether by the hand of Art,
That eastern Sultan, amid flowers enwrought
On silken tissue, might diffuse his limbs
In languor; or, by Nature, for repose
Of panting Wood-nymph, wearied with the chase.
(lines 1-15)

The clouds multiply the sunbeams rather than overshade them, and even time's dismantling of the oak serves only to make it less powerful, more delightful in its provision of just shade enough for one. The "Couch beautiful" is rendered both exotic and erotic by the image of the Sultan diffusing "his limbs / In languor," an eroticism continued in the more "natural" (or rather Ovidian) image of the "panting Wood-nymph." Such eroticism is unusual for Wordsworth. And it is an eroticism based upon what Wordsworth claims to be the masculinity of English nature—and the nature of English masculinity—an oak-like strength that creates a safe sensual playground. It is contrasted with the predatory sexual violence upon which Greek nature is founded—Apollo's pursuit of Daphne caused her to be turned into a tree. And it is capable of lulling the figure of Oriental despotism (political and sexual), the Sultan (a figure to whom the King had been compared often enough in 1819-20). Here, for Wordsworth, the threat of unrestrained monarchical power is lulled by a soft and sensual feminine "heath," itself protected by the shading oak (a tree of English masculinity, traditional, restrained, protective for Burke, Cowper, and Wordsworth himself in *The Prelude*).

20. The poem attacks the sexual politics of the Regent then, in that a Burkeian masculine sublime, an English sheltering tree defined against the possibly violent masculinity of Greek and Turk, makes a space for a feminine and erotic beautiful which can then flower under its protection. The beautiful both softens the tree's masculine authority (as Burke said the beautiful should soften the sublime ("Philosophical Enquiry" 111, 157)) and allows it an erotic satisfaction defined as *looking*. The feminine is still governed by and defined for the satisfaction of the masculine, but in an affectionate yet formal address: the narrator can offer the tree to the Lady as a place of peace and show himself doing so, subsuming troubling intimations in social generosity:

O Lady! fairer in thy Poet's sight
Than fairest spiritual creature of the groves,
Approach;—and, thus invited, crown with rest
The noon-tide hour: though truly some there are
Whose footsteps superstitiously avoid
This venerable Tree; for, when the wind
Blows keenly, it sends forth a creaking sound
(Above the general roar of woods and crags)
Distinctly heard from far—a doleful note!
As if (so Grecian shepherds would have deemed)
The Hamadryad, pent within, bewailed
Some bitter wrong. Nor it is unbelieved,

By ruder fancy, that a troubled ghost
Haunts the old trunk; lamenting deeds of which
The flowery ground is conscious. But no wind
Sweeps now along this elevated ridge;
Not even a zephyr stirs;—the obnoxious Tree
Is mute; and, in his silence, would look down,
O lovely Wanderer of the trackless hills,
On thy reclining form with more delight
Than his coevals in the sheltered vale
Seem to participate, the while they view
Their own far-stretching arms and leafy heads
Vividly pictured in some glassy pool,
That, for a brief space, checks the hurrying stream!
(lines 16-40)

21. Yet those troubling intimations are present: the Burkeian tree is haunted by the temptations attendant upon the equation of sublimity, masculinity, and political authority. These are the temptations of masculine self-assertion—the violent rapes committed by Greek gods. But the rootedness of the tree allows these temptations to remain as ghosts, laid to rest or at least confined within the tree by the poet-narrator, like Sycorax by Prospero. Wordsworth raises and then confines the ghosts. He lays the demons of male power by aligning that power (including his own as a male poet) with the stable and safe ground of a known and little-changing English landscape/landscape of Englishness. He does so by a carefully self-cancelling syntax: the phrase "Nor is it unbelieved" establishes a disturbingly unattributed half-belief in ghosts which taints the beautiful—as is indicated by the lines "lamenting deeds of which / The flowery ground is conscious." Yet the phrase "no wind / Sweeps now along" then counters this. The repeated negative forms a positive, cancelling the dangerous negative forces of lament and thereby restoring the flowery ground for the Lady to approach. Or, to put it another way, the poem raises the possibility of the defloration of the ground (and of the Lady), only to allay fears by confidently asserting that such violence is absent for the moment. It is a spot (and a poetry) won back from sublime threat and from an intimation of the threatening violence of male desire, in favor of an erotic but also decorous beautiful. Desire will be expressed not as rape but by an entreaty to the Lady which seeks her confidence by preparing the (peaceful) ground. And desire will be satisfied by the voyeurism of the tree watching her "reclining form" and of the narrator imagining them both. Since the whole scene is imagined *for* the Lady it acts, at the same time, as a gift to her in which offers for a more direct and intimate relationship are encoded, an encoding which, if understood, might lead her actually to accept.

22. The difficulty of containing the violence traditionally inherent in masculine authority is apparent in the word "obnoxious." Meaning principally "vulnerable to harm," "subject to authority," the word also meant, then though more commonly now, "harmful."[9] The vulnerable "time-dismantled" tree remains haunted by intimations of harm and violence: it may be "mute" but a silent ambiguity remains. What also remain, although the poem works hard to contain them, are allusions to other poems. These trouble the serenity that the poem seeks. The ancient and lone tree on "this elevated ridge" and the "Wanderer of the trackless hills" recall the bleak and disturbing pairing in "The Thorn" of the tree and the lone woman in a landscape haunted by violent death. Working against such allusions, however, are others which show that disturbance can lead to a greater harmony: "it sends forth a creaking sound / (Above the general roar of woods and crags) / Distinctly heard from far—a doleful note" (lines 22-24) echoes Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," in which the senses "keep the heart / Awake to Love and Beauty" and the "last rook" "flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm / For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom / No sound is dissonant which tells of Life" (lines 63-4, 74-6). Further

echoes, of *Home at Grasmere*'s "sheltered vale" and of Coleridge's "Dejection: an Ode," in which solitary melancholy is overcome by appealing and dedicating the verse to a Lady, also help to incorporate disruptive intimations within a harmonious social community in nature. It is an allusive strategy designed to temper the visionary power of the solitary sublime, which Wordsworth had explored in 1802 in the "Immortality" ode in reaction and contradistinction to Coleridge's "Dejection", with "Dejection's" beautiful appeal to feminine sympathy.

23. The last eight lines of the poem replace the troubling sounds of the tree with the loving look of a male unbending his solitary uprightness, as Burke had declared he should, because entranced and completed by the female that he shelters in her appealingly available beauty: "in his silence, would look down. . ." This scene complements, rather than rejects, Coleridge's less paternal and more desperate appeal to female sympathy in "Dejection." This scene is more delightful for the male tree than are—in the poem's very last lines—their own reflections for the "coeval" trees in the sheltered vale. Yet viewing those reflections is itself a powerful act, since it allows a momentary self-knowledge "vividly pictured" out of the flux of "the hurrying stream" of time and space:

    ...while they view
    Their own far-stretching arms and leafy heads
    Vividly pictured in some glassy pool,
    That, for a brief space, checks the hurrying stream!
    (lines 37-40)

    Powerful though it is, however, the privileged picture that these waterside trees together gain of themselves is potentially narcissistic (and Narcissus was changed into a waterside plant). It is less permanent than the reconciliation of sublime and beautiful, of male and female available to the poetic tree and Lady.

24. The narrator lays his sole and potentially violent possession of masculine authority to rest in a sexualized nature, making of the object world a mythical place in which the sublime violence of rape and metamorphosis is replaced by a beautiful viewing. This viewing completes and delights the independent male and offers the female secure sensual pleasure (no apples to pluck). She is, of course, in a subordinate position as were all women and most men in the oak-like paternalist constitution that Burke and Wordsworth supported.

25. The landscape of "The Haunted Tree" is not an evasion or denial of political and social issues. It is not a displacement of such issues into some secondary area of nature. On the contrary, it is a modification of an eighteenth-century tradition in which the landscape was treated as a testing ground for the moral and social health of the nation, as the place upon which proper authority could be measured. That tradition was itself founded on the fact that the politics of local landscapes were also national politics: it was the ownership of land which gave the nobility and gentry political power and which defined their duties in the state. The politics of nature in Regency Britain were not substitutes for some more fundamental level of politics but were vital in a nation in which reform of a parliament still dominated by the landed gentry was the most important issue. Burke, Cowper and Price had redefined and reasserted the authority of the gentry in their iconography of landscape. To this Wordsworth added an anti-Byronic anti-Regent redefinition of the sexual politics of the Burkeian sublime. In doing so he countered Orientalist fashions and the corruption they revealed in the contemporary aristocracy.

26. "The Haunted Tree" achieves what I think it is appropriate to call a mythologization of nature. Like Greek myth it places issues of power and desire at the heart of the national landscape. In a critique of Greek myth, however, it founds English nature not on rape and metamorphosis, but sensual playfulness (including the playful language of the poem itself)—on a looking but not touching. This playfulness

flourishes when the ghosts of male violence that haunt the scene have been confined within the oak of masculine self-restraining strength. Narrator and Lady, poet and reader can then meet in a land safe for loving play (or at least for voyeuristic looking). It is a poetic land in which one encounters the human as if it were natural and the natural as if it were human—a dreamy and langorous land of representation poised between self and other, subject and object, power and love, violence and peace, sight and sound. It is a land, Wordsworth suggests, in which poetry must make men live lest the solitary man, like a despotic ruler or usurping poet, hear in all things only his own violent desire, see only his own beloved self. It is a green land and, Wordsworth would have us believe, a pleasant one too. But within its greenness, within the ecological and social harmony it would teach us, is a paternalism that should give us pause. To love nature, Wordsworth shows, involves remaking it in our own image—an image in which traditional hierarchies and inequalities not only persist but are desired. Wordsworth's green England, by 1820 at least, is not Bate's but Burke's, not revolutionary but conservative, not red but blue.

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Notes

1 Although the park is not named within the poem.

2 See Levinson, and see Liu; also McGann, p. 91.

3 The discussion appears in book II, chapter 27 of Locke (pp. 330-31).

4 This political tree-symbolism is discussed in Schama, pp. 53-74.

5 Wordsworth's line echoes lines 50-52, 103-4. See the discussion in Fulford (1995).

6 See Fulford (1995 [a]) and (1998).

7 Letter of 21 June 1820, from Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich, quoted in Smith, p. 40.

8 "The bill thrown out, but the pains and penalties inflicted" (15 November 1820), reproduced in Smith, p. 142.

9 The word appears in *Paradise Lost*, where its ambiguity reveals the fallen Satan's vulnerability and his harmfulness as he enters Eden ready to tempt Eve: "Who aspires must down as low / As high he soared, obnoxious first or last / To basest things" (IX, 169-71). Wordsworth's use of the word here makes his tree *possibly* Satanic, *possibly* one vulnerable to an occupation by the evil spirit of Satanic desire. But in the poem as a whole the temptation to know good and evil and the sexual fall that ensues is refused. There is no serpentine rape of Eve, no sublime pursuit of knowledge and power by the male narrator to its independent but bitter end.

Romanticism & Ecology

"Sweet Influences": Human/Animal Difference and Social Cohesion in Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1794-1806[*]

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Ours is the reptile's lot, much toil, much blame,
Manifold motions making little speed,
And to deform and kill the things whereon we feed.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Psyche"

1. Were a seventeenth-century English painter to travel in time to a gallery in the latter half of the eighteenth century he or she might well exclaim, wide-eyed, "Where did all the animals come from?" For the animals depicted in those portraits and landscapes had somehow migrated from the backgrounds they had previously inhabited to become foregrounded pictorial subjects in themselves: cattle in fields, dogs and horses standing alone or beside proud owners, horses arranged like Grecian statuary, wild birds, exotic lions, and inquisitive monkeys painstakingly depicted in quasi-natural habitats. Where indeed had all these animals come from, and why were they here? [1]

2. The phenomenon of George Stubbs (1724-1806), the renowned English "horse painter," would itself have shocked our traveler. Consider, for example, Stubbs's portrait of "Captain Samuel Sharpe Pocklington with His Wife, Pleasance, and possibly His Sister, Frances" (1769). Although anthropocentrically enough titled and most likely commissioned as a marriage portrait, this painting is really a study of Captain Pocklington's horse. Whether or not the Captain or his wife was cognizant of the fact, Stubbs, whose popular *Anatomy of the Horse* had been published three years before in 1766, was clearly using the much-prized, status-confirming animal not just as the group portrait's focus but also as its main point of interest. It is the horse around whom the three human figures are posed, and it is the horse, not the good Captain, who receives Mrs. Pocklington's affectionate attentions. In his life-time Stubbs painted many such animal-oriented works, including horse portraits like the well-known "Whistlejacket" (1762) and the series of equine formal studies, "Mares and Foals" (1762-68, 1776), as well as numerous paintings of dogs and more exotic creatures—lions, zebras, and the occasional rhinoceros. Stubbs had made a career of it.

3. Similarly, John Constable's landscape paintings are populated by as many animals as people, with animals frequently serving as a work's focus or focusing agent, as in "The Haywain" (1821) and "Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows" (1829). In each tableau a lone, attentive dog—the sole depicted observer—mediates the viewer's gaze, directing it to a dramatic animal scene of wain-pulling horses.[2] These and other creative works of the Romantic period interconnect human perception and animal perception or being, human economy and animals' various places within it or outside it, and by so doing foreground both human-animal similarities and differences, among other things. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries such representations of animals indeed are by no means merely familiar (or exotic) subject matter or handy rhetorical tools readily substitutable by other signs. On the contrary, in these years animal depictions are fundamentally tied to Englishmen's shifting social existence, as indices of cultural change, of difference, and of identity.[3]

4. Not coincidentally, and for more than a few thinkers of the time not a little fortuitously, the human

monarchy of nature had itself recently been toppled and reconceptualized under a new system of animal classification.[4] A Copernican revolution all its own, the Linnaean taxonomy, as utilized by English natural scientists like Erasmus Darwin, resituated *homo sapiens* as one animal among many similar, interconnected species. Hence, in the preface to his epidemiological taxonomy, *Zoonomia* (1794),[5] Darwin could argue that, although the "Creator of all things has infinitely diversified the works of his hands," he has also "stamped a certain similitude on the features of nature, that demonstrate to us, that the whole is *one family* of one parent" (B; original emphasis). Darwin's metaphor of the family aptly sums up the then-emerging view of the biological commonality of all creatures, a view that posited creatures' mutual bonds and shared affections—and also significantly implies the social connections within and between species. In the widely popular natural histories by Buffon and Bewick one similarly finds animals' social nature to be a foregrounded concern, these histories' illustrations depicting animals in "clearly defined social setting[s]," with careful attention also given to their relationship to human economy (Potts 18).

5. In a manner equally typical of the Romantic era, Darwin moreover holds the source of human virtue itself to rest in "our intellectual sympathies with . . . the miseries, or with the joys, of our fellow creatures" (255). Our connection *to* animals is for him, as for others of his time[6], dependent upon our sympathetic identification *with* these "our fellow creatures." In this way, eighteenth-century natural history presented to British men and women not just a further blow to traditional notions of the place of human beings—"a dissolution and reconstitution of conceptual patterns by which natural phenomena had been understood" (Kroeber 18)—but also an important means of re-envisioning humankind's proper place in the social and natural fabric: as a part of a unifying (albeit for some thinkers also a dislocating)[7] whole of interconnected species—even of a dynamic "family" of people, horses, dogs, and other, undomesticated creatures.

6. In *Romantic Ecology* Jonathan Bate argues that what poets like William Wordsworth added to this new matrix of an interrelated ecosystem or "economy of nature" (the English title of one of Linnaeus's essays) was their "emphasis on a symbiosis between the economy of nature and the activities of humankind": the Wordsworthian "'one life' within us and abroad" (39-40).[8] And, as James Turner observes, this is where animals "came in," answering the psychological call on the part of late-eighteenth-century men and women for a "bulwark" against "the wrenching changes wrought by factory and city" (31-33). The enormous popularity of animals in the period, both in paintings and in zoos, can of course be attributed to other factors as well, ranging from an urban population's nostalgia for rural times and places past[9] to a growing empire's appetite for exoticism.[10] But turn-of-the-century animal representations particularly responded to the anxieties and desires prompted by social and political change—by revolution, war, domestic disrule, and reform—and by the era's wrenching economic transformations. At a time when age-old "securities of class and status and theological assumptions" were themselves being shattered (McFarland 20), when distrust of government and the old orthodoxies was at an all-time high, and when deep fissures could be glimpsed within England's social, political, and economic landscape, artists responded to these historical pressures by attempting in their works to discover and represent new forms of social organization and subjectivity.[11] And it is in this cultural project that animals came into the picture.

7. Indeed, for Romantic artists animals particularly satisfied a desire to find alternative, local, and noneconomic means of human connection, a social appeal that is especially prominent in the late-eighteenth-century poetry of Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. During the increasingly turbulent years from 1794 to 1800, including the nadir of the Terror, these two poets depict new forms of social cohesion and identity based upon lasting bonds able to "bind all men together" (Eisold 122). The poets' sociological project leads them to represent communities articulated by mysterious human-

animal linkages, as in Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring," from his and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. Here Wordsworth describes his experience of nature as a product of his abiding belief (most likely owed in part to Erasmus Darwin) that the "human soul" is intricately linked to nature's "fair works" (ll. 5-6). For Karl Kroeber this provocative hypothesis in fact implies the speaker's understanding that "all human cultures are constructed by natural creatures" (45). And the poet's belief indeed suggests not just his pantheism but also his understanding of a profound social connection between human beings and animals, one with the potential to form a "true community . . . / Of many into one incorporate," as Wordsworth describes matters in *Home at Grasmere* (MS. B.819-20). To a diseased social-political world "where no brotherhood exists" (*The Prelude* 2.404), human and animal relationships offered to these poets and to other artists important potential bonds for human connection: "mysteries of passion which have made, / And shall continue evermore to make . . . / One brotherhood of all the human race" (10.84-88).

8. Although Coleridge himself winced at Wordsworth's lingering "One Life" pantheism (despite the fact that Wordsworth had gleaned much of it from him) and, in Kroeber's words, would in later years "devote major energies . . . to defending a transcendental vision of divinity hostile to Romantic proto-ecological nature poetry" (67), in the waning years of the eighteenth century he generally shared his friend's "proto-ecological" orientation and belief in the divine, and deeply social, power of nature's animals. Notably, in Coleridge's "Fears in Solitude" (1798), the poet, fearing the rumored French invasion of England, finds consolation that in a "spirit-healing nook" a man still may

    ...lie on fern or withered heath,
    While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
    The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
    And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
    Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame. . . . (12-21; emphasis added)

   Communion with nature's "best" minstrel produces in the quiet listener "[r]eligious meanings" and "dreams of better worlds" (24, 26) set in stark contrast to a violent world of "[i]nvasion," "fear and rage, / And undetermined conflict" (36-38), a world made all the more despicable by these contrasting, nature-bestowed dreams of more tranquil "society" (218). Nature's harmony here has the power to guide the self from such alienating political preoccupations to "[l]ove, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind" (232)—thoughts of one's natural connection to his or her "brethren" (155). Like the well-known dictum of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, that love of nature leads to love of humankind, these lines by Coleridge describe nature's active involvement in fostering community. And, although the lark's music is missing from the poem's concluding description of a now "silent dell" (228) (and even may have been owed to the poet's recollection of a past visit), at the outset that songbird, singing "unseen / The Minstrelsy that solitude loves best," like some "angel in the clouds," singularly contributes to those vital "sweet influences" that tremble over the speaker (19-21, 28) and elicit both his "melancholy" thoughts about his warring "human brethren" (32) and his more hopeful visions of "better worlds" populated by animals and (animal-) loving human beings.

9. Coleridge's earlier poem "To A Young Ass" (1794), popular enough to have been lampooned by Lord Byron, similarly represents animals as makers or markers of community and communitarian feeling. It also presents the animal as an emblem of oppression, the "[p]oor little Foal of an oppressed Race" (1).[12] The speaker exclaims, "I hail thee *Brother*—spite of the fool's scorn! / And fane would take thee with me, in the Dell / Of Peace and mild Equality to dwell" (26-28). The latter reference is to Coleridge's and Robert Southey's ambitious utopian scheme, "Pantisocracy," but we should not let their failure ever to realize that idealized dell overshadow the poem's more immediate aims,[13] akin to the French Revolution's own, by then vanishing, goals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. The "*Brother*" foal,

italicized in Coleridge's text arguably to emphasize precisely this revolutionary significance,[14] is to be set free—so the speaker would wish, anyway—to dwell in "mild Equality" with the poet and his fellow pantisocrats, in a life of work and playful "bray[s] of joy" (34-35). The poem's animal addressee thus serves not just as an exemplum of rural poverty's brutalizing effects but also as a sign and source of resistance to such economic brutalization. For the speaker, true brotherhood, not to mention true equality and liberty, must include the foal. In this Coleridgean manifesto of sorts the principal source of social cohesion rests in the socializing sympathies the foal itself occasions and which its brays repeatedly confirm, in stark contrast to the caged bird in the imprisoning city, whose "warbled melodies" merely "soothe to rest / The aching of pale Fashion's vacant breast!" (35-36).

10. Wordsworth's "Poor Susan," from *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800, also describes a caged bird's song, heard by Susan from a London street corner. The lone thrush's singing prompts her to daydream of remembered "Green pastures . . . in the midst of the dale, / Down which she [had] so often . . . tripp'd with her pail" (9-10). In lines later excised at Charles Lamb's urging, the poem's speaker goes on to chastise Susan as a "Poor Outcast" (perhaps a prostitute, then no uncommon condition) who should return to her father's rustic home and, having replaced her fancy loomed dress for a "plain russet" home-spun gown, once again hear a "thrush sing from a tree of its own" (17-20). Here, too, the countryside is depicted as an ideal dell of free animals and concomitantly liberated human beings. By contrast, the city is a place of imprisoned humans and animals alike. At the same time, of course, such liberating communitarian contact with animals is in some manner occasioned by, or is at least responsive to, their past and present suffering.

11. To return for a moment to Wordsworth's "Lines Written In Early Spring," we find its poet similarly seeking social connection and belonging, his desires' fulfillment resting in his firm "faith that every flower / Enjoys the air it breathes" (11-12). Yet the flowers' enjoyment of their life processes is, like the thoughts of the birds hopping about nearby him, something he "cannot measure" (14). This conclusion of his is more than a poetical jab at Enlightenment rationalism's tendency to quantify and calculate all things. For these creatures, although sentient and pleasure-loving like the speaker himself, serve as a "measure" of his *difference* from them as well as from those men unable or unwilling to accept a faith established in opposition to "[w]hat man has made of man" (8). Such faith implicitly seeks a missing or lost form of social cohesion, a form the poem's speaker lacks and fervently desires. Still, despite his depressing awareness of his alienation from his destructive fellow human beings, the poet points to what in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry proves to be an implicit basis for human connection and for humanity's amelioration: that, in spite of, or because of, animals' difference from human beings, nature's creatures nevertheless have this power to "link" together the "human soul" that runs as one life through living things. As other works by Wordsworth and Coleridge reveal, it is in fact this irreducible difference between animals and human beings that ultimately makes such linkages between modern people possible, and even necessary. "What man has made" of animals, and what animals in turn can make of man, becomes a basis, in places even the sole basis, for community.

12. Coleridge's "The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem," also from *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), while of paramount importance in this social articulation of human beings and animals, may well at first seem an odd choice, for it is clearly skeptical about at least some of the connections poets discern between humankind and nature's animals (those animals' thoughts being immeasurable even in Wordsworth's more optimistic "Lines"). Indeed, Coleridge's poem starkly decries our narcissistic tendency to transform nature into but a distorted mirror of ourselves. In a notable turn against classical and Miltonic tradition, and against the "pity-pleading strains" of his own prior poem "To A Nightingale," Coleridge's speaker insists instead that the singing nightingale, rather than being "melancholy" (in accordance with the Greek myth of Philomela), is "full of love / And joyance" (15, 42-43). The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the Spenserian word *joyance* was, according to Samuel Johnson's own lexicographical judgment, obsolete by the eighteenth century. The antiquated term was then

reintroduced by Coleridge (and Southey), to become a favorite archaism of later poets like Percy Shelley, as in his avian poem "To A Skylark." Coleridge had recoined the word "joyance" in "Lines on an Autumnal Evening" (1796), and then chose to redeploy the term in "The Nightingale," with the reasonable expectation of the word's antique strangeness to his readers.

13. The term "joyance" interestingly denotes as much an activity as a state of feeling or being, referring, unlike the common word "joy," both to feeling joy and to the action of showing it (*OED*). The archaism thus serves to underline animal nature's active role in altering human feeling: its power to help compose in the listener an active, participatory joy similar to animals' own. Yet while the word "joyance" suggests an active role for nature's creatures[15] and their "sweet influences," at the same time the term's use in these lines also reveals its human authors' limits. Coming as the word does on the heels of the poet's impassioned condemnation of past writers' attributions of "melancholy" to the famed songbird, his own corrective perceptions of "love" and "joyance" in the bird's song must raise suspicions. Is not his revisionist view but the narcissistic antithesis of the rejected Miltonic, and prior Coleridgean, perspective, too simply exchanging avian sadness for avian happiness? While one should think it true that in nature there indeed is "nothing melancholy," given such anti-anthropomorphic, anti-anthropocentric logic as the speaker has proposed, can sentient nature be said to be full of active "joyance" either?[16] In this particular context, the word *joyance* itself becomes increasingly suspect: as a term that signifies not just being but *showing*: display, semblance, and, by implication, perception.

14. The reader might also raise a skeptical eyebrow when the poet proceeds to describe the singing nightingale as "disburthen[ing]" his "full soul" in an expressive activity analogous to the actions of Coleridge's own proper poet, who similarly "surrender[s] his whole spirit" (48, 29). Such identifications again smack of anthropomorphic narcissism, not to mention of the pathetic fallacy, especially in light of the poet's prior indictment of the solipsistic *penseroso* whose "melancholy" personifications—bad figures of speech—merely tell back "the tale" of his "own sorrows" (20-21). Given Coleridge's staunch rejection of just such artificial "conceit[s]" (23), his treatment of the bird's "joyance" generates troublesome contradictions indeed, contradictions that in turn point to significant problems of perceiving and representing animals (miring the "One Life" doctrine in something of an epistemological quandary). The singing bird, appropriately and traditionally unseen, in this way remains intriguingly beyond the culturally constraining powers of human categorization and understanding. And, in this way, as a text "The Nightingale" provides within itself a curious resistance to its own anthropomorphic reductions, a resistance significant, as it turns out, to the poem's representation of human/animal community.

15. This social lesson is revealed principally in the closing lines' repeated adieus to the bird and to its human audience of friends: "Once more, farewell, / Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friends! farewell" (109-10). The salutation forms a chiasmus of addresses and addressees:

nightingale	farewell
X	
farewell	friends

This rhetorical figure serves, along with the associative repetition of the lines' adverbial phrases ("Once more," "once more"), to conflate the avian singer with its human audience. In fact, the chiasmus figuratively connects the bird and its crowd of listeners as one community, engaged in a type of

nocturnal conversation. The human friendships of course to some extent precede this meeting in the company of the nightingale (and of its fellow singers in nearby fields), yet the meeting of friends is occasioned by the bird's audible presence. Indeed, the propinquity of these "loitering" listeners (89) is made possible only by the animal "joyance" produced by the nightingale's "love-chant[s]" (48)—chants that will in turn lead to the next night's consolidating farewells: "till tomorrow eve, . . . a short farewell" (87-88). For, as the poet proclaims, such bird-song is the stuff of answer and provocation, of "skirmish and capricious passagings, / And murmurs musical and swift jug jug" (58-60).

16. The phrase "jug jug" itself merits attention. The word *jug* was one commonly used to signify the notes of nightingales and other songbirds, and so has more sense than nonsense about it (although even such onomatopoeic words as *jug* are conventional and arbitrary rather than strictly motivated and, for lack of a better word, natural).[17] Coleridge's poet strikes a position between cultural revision and traditionalism, arguing for nonmelancholy, perhaps even nonjoyful, "skirmish," and for so customary a description as "jug jug." At the same time, such *jugging* does "bid us [to] listen" (96), while at the same moment importantly frustrating our attempts to interpret, let alone to reproduce, the intricate song. Rather like the poet's child, who though "Nature's playmate" yet "[m]ars" all its sounds "with his imitative lisp" (92-97),[18] the speaker and his friends mar the bird's inimitable singing, and in fact seem to be drawn together night after night by what the nocturnal scene precisely does *not* provide them: by what their language of poetic archaisms, onomatopoeias, and other suspect figures of speech cannot reproduce "once more." For the adult friends, as for the child, the nightingale's "love-chant" remains a "fast thick warble" of notes "delicious" for their difference, resistance, complexity, and mystery. Such resistance to knowing bids the bird's human listeners return to become more "[f]amiliar" with enchanted song that remains strange. And in seeking this familiarity with animals the listeners are thereby themselves nightly associated in a ritual-like gathering of initiates poised on the epistemological verge of delimiting perceptions. "The Nightingale" is in this way very much a "conversation poem," as Coleridge subtitled it, but one of limits and transgressions, in which human and animal discourse produces a kind of social conversion based upon linguistic and other forms of discord, violence, and desire.[19] And, as shall now be shown, this marring and atonement are themselves really key parts of a deeper, darker Coleridgean and Wordsworthian schema of human and animal "society" as a collective of "sweet influences" prompted by animal "mysteries of passion," including animal suffering and sacrifice.

17. Although it might at first appear to be a quite different human/animal scheme that we encounter in Coleridge's well-known lyrical ballad, *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1797-98), in fact this poem makes even clearer the violence—a markedly physical violence—and atoning acts of sympathy and story-telling that frequently underlie animal-based community. James McKusick sees the story's Mariner, a sea-farer cursed for his thoughtless shooting of an albatross, as at the outset "a Cartesian dualist, a detached observer cut off from any feeling of empathy or participation in the vast world of life that surrounds him," but who is eventually transformed into a Linnaean or Darwinian self "released from his state of alienation from nature" (385).[20] For, according to McKusick, the Mariner learns "what the Albatross came to teach him: that he must cross the boundaries that divide him from the natural world, through unmotivated acts of compassion between 'man and bird and beast'" (387). This moral, which Coleridge later criticized as being too explicit, is well known even to those unfamiliar with the poem, being a message also proffered by *Goody Two-Shoes* and other children's books of the eighteenth century:[21]

> He prayeth best who loveth best,
> All things both great and small:
> For the dear God, who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all. (647-50)

Oddly, and in contradistinction to Anna Barbauld's, Erasmus Darwin's, and others' belief that the humane treatment of animals was a key means to human moral improvement—for Barbauld, specifically for improving the lower and middle classes—it is because of the Mariner's murderous *dis*regard for one of God's beloved creatures that he comes to be morally improved. His release from the curse placed upon him is earned, as he himself sees it, by his unconscious blessing of other, decidedly less desirable creatures: "water-snakes" swimming alongside his ship. "O happy living things!" he cries in a heart-felt "spring of love" (274, 276). By blessing them "unaware" (277), without ulterior motivation, the Mariner earns the pity of two local nature spirits, one of whom he overhears proclaim to the other that, "the man hath penance done, / And penance more will do" for having offended a fellow-spirit who "lov'd the bird that lov'd the man / Who shot him with his bow" (409-10). However just or unjust the Mariner's divinely bestowed punishment may be, his show of love for animals spares him the gruesome, zombie-like life-in-death inflicted upon his shipmates (who had first condemned but then praised his murder of the albatross, making them, in the words of the poem's later-added commentary, "accomplices in the crime"). It also leads him, by these mysterious rites of suffering, to regard all life, both human and animal, as sacred and interconnected. But "penance more" is nonetheless owed the natural world, and it is in this indebtedness that the social aspects of Coleridge's sea-tale are revealed.

18. At his tale's end the Mariner relates how, his ghost ship having sunk off the shore of his native land, he at once found himself stricken

> With a woeful agony,
> Which forc'd me to begin my tale
> And then it left me free.
> Since then at an uncertain hour
> Now oftimes and now fewer,
> That anguish comes and makes me tell
> My ghastly aventure. (612-18)

The Mariner thereupon must tell that chosen listener the tale and its compassionate moral. The narrative in this way provides an explanatory coda of its origins: that "penance" owed for animal murder, what the shipmates misinterpreted as beneficent sacrifice, drives the narrative to be rehearsed (reproduced and exchanged), in order, one must suspect, to disseminate this hard-won wisdom about humankind's treatment of, and moral dependence upon, animals. Hence, the Mariner's story is one we overhear as it is told by him to a diverted, spell-bound "wedding-guest," at that most traditional and social of rituals, a marriage—a setting that underlines the tale's social significance.[22] "[S]tunn'd" and "of sense forlorn" from the tale's telling, the guest arises the next day a "sadder and a wiser man" (655-59), his altered condition a result of that narrative. Such learning about animals and human beings completes what might well be called an eco-communitarian circuit, manifesting as it does a system of intertwined human and animal relationships transgressed against in the Mariner's ignorant slaughter of the albatross and then repaired, in part, by his benediction to the water-snakes and his subsequent transmissions of wisdom to a series of distraught but enthralled "guests."

19. Accompanying this animal-oriented wisdom is the underlying guilt upon which such narratives and their implicit cultures are based: a sacrificial[23] originary before whose knot of sin cannot be undone but whose irredeemable violence makes atonement and its totemic human-animal wisdom possible. Narrative in *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* is in this way eucharistic and guilt-ridden; hence, perhaps, the poem's oddly irreconcilable Christian imagery, including the Mariner's "cross bow" (79), a weapon that for McKusick embodies both the "destructive tendency" of technology and "the traditional Christian imagery of sacrifice and atonement" (386). (The dead albatross itself substitutes for a cross

when the sailors hang it around the Mariner's neck). Coleridge's poem presents a genealogy of human violence and atonement regarding animals, and reveals itself to be predicated, as a narrative, upon such transgressions and their authors' attempts to amend them. Yet, as the text makes clear, such acts of atonement are never enough. The mariner's guilt is, rather like his tale, and like Adam's own sin, irrevocable and perpetual, and yet also, in its case, consolidating of relationships ("love") between human beings and animals and between those who grieve and atone; in this instance, between a saddened guest and his haunted mariner-host.

20. Like other such transformational tales, the Mariner's story of sacrifice and atonement is ambivalently predicated upon animal difference and relatedness ("He made and loveth all").[24] It acknowledges the commonality and otherness upon which human-animal relationships, here as in "The Nightingale" and in Wordsworth's "Lines," are inherently founded and structured. Coleridge's *Ancyent Marinere* is in this sense an allegory not just of human benevolence toward animals—an RSPCA forerunner of sorts—but of the binding invisible connections between human and animal realms. It tells how such connections can form communities of human beings bonded by their shared observance of past transgression and present or future atonement. The perpetuity of the narrative and its serial community of tellers and listeners indeed argues for the long journey such wisdom requires. In fact, as we find in Wordsworth's "Hart-Leap Well" (1799) and in *Home at Grasmere* (1800, 1806),[25] such community is never won easily nor ever entirely; it is attained through violence and the post hoc lamenting of what "man" has done to animal.

21. In *Home at Grasmere* Wordsworth describes his and his sister Dorothy's journey into Grasmere's inclement vale. He lingers, as they lingered then, entranced in the locale of Hart-leap Well, which auspiciously intimated to them a "milder day" and "fairer world" to come (B.237-38). This locodescriptive passage is also an intertextual one, alluding to Wordsworth's previously mentioned, appositely titled lyrical ballad "Hart-Leap Well." The latter poem recalls the medieval knight Sir Walter's renowned chasing down of a hart, which then killed itself in its last of three desperate leaps, leaving the spot "curs'd" (124, 141-42). As Raimonda Modiano points out, "by voluntarily leaping to its death" the deer transformed a hunt into a sacrifice; hence Sir Walter's ritualistic raising of three stone pillars to commemorate the dead stag (497). And yet Walter's act of memorialization seems ultimately inconsequential or even impious, due to its lack of the atonement required for such acts of sacrifice and commemoration. "Without mourning," Modiano observes, Walter's action becomes "profane" (499), a "murder," in the words of the poem. David Perkins sees this hunter's killing of the hart as an act of "solipsistic egoism," similar in its way to the Mariner's own "egoistic self-assertion" and rightly memorialized not just by the pillars but by the adjacent pleasure house Walter builds as an expression of his selfish, libidinal desire ("Wordsworth" 439).

22. In lieu of its proper mourning, the hart's death is lamented, we learn, not just by the poem's narrator and tale-telling shepherd but also by nature itself. "This beast not unobserv'd by Nature fell," the poet states, "[h]is death was mourn'd by sympathy divine" (163-64). The animal's "murder" has for the narrator two important "lesson[s]" to teach: first, that we ought never to "blend our pleasure or our pride / With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels" (179-80), and second, as in the *Ancyent Marinere*, that nature's "Being" "[m]aintains a deep and reverential care" for those "quiet creatures whom he loves" (167-68, 177-80). Yet, although "Hart-Leap Well" does in some sense represent an ecological interpenetration of cultural and natural observances—"how the conventionally antagonistic 'cultural' and 'natural' may in fact felicitously interanimate" (Kroeber 55)—the poem ultimately presents a picture less of human-animal felicity than of struggle, at least of past struggle.

23. In *Home at Grasmere* it is at this ambivalent topographical and intertextual spot of Hart-leap Well that Wordsworth and Dorothy, still transfixed in "awful trance," receive the quasi-religious "intimation of

the milder day / Which is to come, the fairer world than this" (238-39). This prognosis or prophecy, owed to their more proper observance of animal suffering, becomes its own form of sacred election, raising them up:

> ...dejected as we were
> Among the records of that doleful place
> By sorrow for the hunted beast who there
> Had yielded up his breath. . . . (240-43)

In their "trance" the poet and his sister experience a religious "Vision of humanity and of God / The Mourner, God the Sufferer" (243-44), of God the Paschal Lamb, that re-emphasizes this passage's intertextual connection to animal sacrifice and to the ritualized eucharistic fellowship that such death or suffering can make possible. In their ambivalent intermingling of "sadness" and "joy" at this past prospect of a creature "suffer[ing] wrongfully" the thoughtful couple finds, significantly, a "promise": that through their observance of past sacrifice—their Christian-like sacralizing of a prior, profane "murder"—their "love" and "knowledge" might "secure" them a "portion" of nature's benevolence (247-55). On the one hand, Wordsworth of course simply hopes that in a world where the death of a hart is signified by nature the lives of humans will receive a similarly blessed accounting. But, on the other hand, as this strange "episode in mourning" shows, it is humans rather than nature spirits who must first undertake such rectifying work (Modiano 499).

24. Their requisite mourning in turn implies that animal death, nature's "tribute of inevitable pain" (l. 841), is what provides the lasting basis for Wordsworthian dwelling and community in Grasmere's vale: first profaning violation (botched animal sacrifice, "murder"), then sacralizing compensation of human sorrow, and finally the hoped-for blessings of fellowship and dwelling such observance may bequeath —blessings that, the poet and his sister hope, may extend beyond a solitary "pair seceding from the common world" to encompass "all the Vales of the earth and all mankind" (249, 256).[26] And yet, in the intertextual domain of these closely linked poems, at least one question remains. Might this couple's aforementioned "joy" at a retrospect of animal suffering, given such joy's proscription in the first of the two lessons of "Hart-Leap Well," profane their commemoration of the hart, thus marring their communitarian fortunes? If such mingling of "joy" and "sadness" at the hart's death makes mourning incomplete or improper, would matters then require, as in Coleridge's sea-tale, that further narratives or revisitations be proffered? Profanation may be unavoidable here, as animal death in Wordsworth and Coleridge ever wavers between murder and sacrifice. At the same time, such ambivalently registered failure and incompleteness may also serve to afford people, in *Home at Grasmere* as in both "The Nightingale" and *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, further possibilities for mourning and for its continuing promise of social cohesion.

25. However one in fact sorts out this dilemma, the couple's sense of belonging to a place, and their concomitant sense of belonging to one another—of "twain" made "pair"—is grounded in their, and in their hoped-for community's, uneasy relationship to (past) animals. Their prospect of dwelling in the death-shadowed valley will be secured by their love for the sacred murdered hart and their (insufficient) sadness at its loss, in a community that is, in contrast to what the poem's speaker espouses, necessarily *not* "without dependence or defect, / Made for itself and happy in itself, / Perfect Contentment, Unity entire" (167-70). For such community in Grasmere is neither independent nor even necessarily "happy in itself"; it is uneasily dependent upon prior animal death for its blessings.

26. This communal dependency upon animal loss is the subject also of another episode, where the poet ponders the likely fate of a missing "lonely pair / Of milk-white Swans" (322-23) that had frequented the lake:

These above all, ah, why are they not here
To share in this day's pleasure? From afar
They came, like Emma and myself, to live
Together here in peace and solitude,
Choosing this Valley, they who had the choice
Of the whole world. . . . We knew them well—I guess
That the whole Valley knew them—but to us
They were more dear than may be well believed . . . (324-29, 332-34)

With regard to the actual fate of the swans, Wordsworth speculates that some local shepherd may "have seized the deadly tube / And parted them, incited by a prize / Which . . . / He should have spared; or haply both are gone, / One death, and that were mercy given to both" (352-57). In reasoning thus he knows he seems to "wrong" the very community he and Dorothy are seeking to join.[27] But the birds' loss nonetheless requires explanation, and seems to threaten the isolated human pair's own place in the vale. Yet, in thus mourning and questioning the swans' likely fate something different results: "No, we are not alone," the poet assures his sister, "we do not stand, / My Emma, here misplaced and desolate, / Loving what no one cares for but ourselves" (646-48). As with their mourning of the hart, this grief over putative past animal suffering or death also promises to earn them inclusion in Grasmere. "Look where we will," the poet holds, "some human heart has been / Before us with its offering. . . . Joy spreads and sorrow spreads" (659-60, 659)—at Hart-leap Well and now here by the lakeside, as a further covenant formed of profane sacrifice and of memorializing, (re)sacralizing grief.

27. If their community in Grasmere is a "unity," then, it is for Wordsworth a profoundly totemic and eucharistic one, comprised of mournful humans and mourned, missing or dead animals and founded both in violence and in ensuing, responsive practices of commemoration. As in Coleridge's *Ancyent Marinere*, such society is uneasily based upon past human/animal difference and transgression, as it is upon present and future acts of responsive, supplemental human atonement. It is in the end a troubling "knowledge" imparted to (or by) him and Dorothy, but at the same time it is social knowledge that transforms the vale of Grasmere into a prospect of a "community . . . / Of many into one incorporate": of a social formation of "[c]ompanions, brethren, [and] consecrated friends" (347) sanctified by the communion and "brotherhood" that human and animal relationships—forms of animal sacrifice and human atonement—"once more" provide.

28. For Wordsworth and Coleridge, and for other Romantic-period artists, human beings' relationships with animals are vitally social and efficaciously vexed. "Love" for animals seems, often as not in the above poems, and in others such as Wordsworth's "There was a Boy" (a.k.a. the "Boy of Winander"), to arise out of the gulf of difference between humans and animals. In poems like Coleridge's "Nightingale" and Wordsworth's "Lines" we find speakers mindful of the marring effects of human cognition and action upon animal otherness. We also discover that community is repeatedly represented as a product of such difference and of its violent clashes. As Wordsworth's *Home at Grasmere* and Coleridge's *Ancyent Marinere* even more clearly reveal, animal otherness, more than human/animal sameness (as Erasmus Darwin proclaimed), is the principal foundation for community, a community ever observing, belatedly, its difference from and violence toward the myriad animals with which it identifies. In these Romantic-era representations, animals help to realize alternative, perhaps truer or more legitimate, forms of community founded not upon the vagaries of political revolution, reform, or even nationality but upon ritual observance: a working-through of what remains deeply problematical in human beings' relationships with animals.

29. In the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, animals' "preeminent utility to mankind" (William Kirby, ca. 1835; cited Thomas 28) indeed was, for writers and painters, a social utility: a capacity to produce communities founded upon observance and the playing over "once more" of that

which remains unsung or unmemorialized, even violent, in human beings' troubled relationships with nature's creatures. And while Wordsworth's and Coleridge's desire for such animal-derived community would appear to wane in subsequent years, owed in part no doubt to the poets' restored confidence in the institutions and religious orthodoxies they had previously questioned or condemned, at the turn of the century their longing for new, alternative means of social cohesion was acute. Animals uniquely answered their call, as they did the calls of other artists, both for a broader notion of "brotherhood" and for "a transformative process" (Fulford 124) capable of constituting or renewing communitarian connections.[28]

30. One thus finds in Stubbs's portrait of the Pocklington family that the foundational relationship of husband and wife is triangulated and emblematized by the horse, to whom Mrs. Pocklington gives her hand and affections, and beside which the captain stands, legs mimetically poised like the animal's own. Such formal human-animal, quasi-familial similitude of course also serves to emphasize actual human-animal *difference*. As Onno Dag Oerlemans observes, "[w]hat makes Stubbs' paintings distinctive . . . is that they also very often attempt to render the animal strange, distant, and 'other' than its would-be owner" (9). For Oerlemans, Stubbs represents such domesticated animals "as having an energy and presence *not* possessed or even understood by the humans around them," a vitality subtly encoded by just such likenesses of "expression" as we find between owner and horse (9-10). And yet the structure of the Pocklington community is established in the human figures' attention to this most valued of Britain's animals, without whose presence and differential tension, it seems, given Stubbs's arrangement, there could be no proper marriage, or minimal community, at all.

31. In this foregrounding of animals and of animal-oriented economies of various kinds, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries ultimately represent something of a historical bubble in the cultural articulation of the human and the animal. At no time before or since have domestic and wild animals been so conspicuous within and so central to Western conceptions of human social interconnection and subjectivity. But it was a time that passed. Stubbs and even his more emotive artistic successors fell out of public favor (Vaughan 171). As Britain's social and political structures changed it would appear that animals were less needed as the subjects of these artists' social reimaginings.[29] Animals thereupon receded into the pastoral backgrounds and rural memories from which they had come. As Lyle Rexer contends, the French Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) "was, perhaps, the last great Western painter for whom animals really mattered." Since that time animals have been "increasingly absorbed into a corner of the public's consciousness" as trivial symbols "of times past and places elsewhere" (37). Polly Chiapetta similarly perceives animals' decline in the paintings of the English Victorian artist Edwin Landseer (1802-73), whose works anthropomorphically represent animals in such a manner as to bring "the sublime and the ridiculous . . . perilously close" (60). For his part, John Berger mourns the loss even of such distorting anthropomorphisms, for their loss marked animals' definitive cultural disappearance. Today, he laments, "we live without them" (9). Despite the advent of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory, in our era we are perhaps farther than ever from his grandfather Erasmus Darwin's social conception of humans and animals as "one family," and from Wordsworth's, Coleridge's, and other artists' depictions of human/animal intra- or inter-familial difference as a basis for cohesion. And yet, as Rexer argues, even in our time, on some level, animal-oriented artists continue to seek "to 'make a connection,' to reforge a broken bond" (40). It may be that these artists' and their Romantic predecessors' representations of animals still retain a certain cultural "utility," providing alternative visions of identity, difference, and community—even for a post-Romantic age.

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Notes

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1 This is not to say that seventeenth-century painters, especially those on the continent, did not depict animals in their works. The Dutch artist Albert Cuyp (1620-91) is but one example. Yet, with the exception of some Flemish and Dutch paintings, such representations of foregrounded animals are few before the advent of the Romantic era—certainly in Britain's pictorial arts.

2 According to William Galperin, "The Haywain" depicts "a world uncontrolled by human or authorial intervention" (87) and governed by what amounts to a different way of seeing (93). This other, animal's-eye vantage repeatedly attracts and blocks the human viewer's gaze, producing a "failure of absorption" in the aesthetic experience (95).

3 As Tim Ingold explains, the question "What is an animal?" can be "construed in a number of ways, all of which are concerned with problems surrounding the definition of boundaries, whether between humans and non-human animals, animals and plants, or living and non-living" (1).

4 Keith Thomas observes that Linnaeus's *Systema naturae* (1735) "unabashedly grouped *Homo sapiens* with other mammalian species and, more precisely, with other primates in the order *Anthropomorpha*. This may have encouraged the many students of that influential work to think more readily of man as an animal" and to view nature as a realm of evolving rather than static and fixed positions (7). Alex Potts adds that such new ideas about natural order were themselves tied to "changing conceptions of social order" (12)—in contrast to the medieval and Renaissance paradigms of the *scala naturae*, recently analyzed by Christopher Manes (20-21) and, in slightly different terms, by Henk Verhoog (208-10).

5 Coleridge praised Erasmus Darwin early on as "the most inventive and philosophical of men. He thinks in a new train on all subjects except religion" (*Collected Letters* I.99). *Zoonomia*, although not as popular as Darwin's poetical treatise *The Loves of the Plants*, was nonetheless sought out upon its publication by Wordsworth, some of whose poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, such as "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," notably draw on Darwin. "Lines Written in Early Spring," with its "faith" in plants' and animals' pleasure, also likely draws upon Darwin's work (see Matlak 77-78).

6 A measure of this general shift in sensibility can be gauged by Lord Erskine's speech on behalf of his 1809 bill for the prevention of "Malicious and Wanton Cruelty to Animals." Although Erskine acknowledges that humans may "enjoy" animals for food, pleasure, and curiosity, he argues for our benevolent treatment of our fellow creatures, as "[a]lmost every sense bestowed upon Man is equally bestowed upon them—Seeing—Hearing—Feeling—Thinking—the sense of pain and pleasure—the passions of love and anger—sensibility to kindness, and pangs from unkindness and neglect, are inseparable characteristics of their natures as much as of our own" (4). His view is noticeably close to Darwin's own. Happily for Erskine's cause, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) had pronounced "[t]he wise and virtuous man" to be "at all times willing" to sacrifice his selfish interest "to the interest of that great society of all sensible and intelligent beings" (346). Like Darwin's ideas about nature, Smith's sense of a greater "society" of "sensible . . . beings" offered conceptual opportunities to his contemporaries and successors for reimagining social relationships and identities.

7 "I see nothing to loathe in nature," Byron ambivalently observes in Canto 3 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, "save to be / A link reluctant in a fleshly chain, / Class'd among creatures. . ." (684-86).

8 The nineteenth-century term "ecology" is, as Bate notes, comprised of the Greek words *logos* and *oikos*: "system" and "dwelling." Coined in 1866 by the zoologist Ernst Haeckel to denote the "economy of nature" and "its friendly and inimical relations" of animals (cited Bate 36), *ecology* as a term succinctly captures the prior Romantic preoccupation with dwelling (ruins, bowers, cottages) and with whatever system makes such dwelling and social life possible.

9 Turner argues that even those who welcomed the forces of progress in England felt "a twinge of uneasiness" and "a touch of longing for the familiar life fading away" (33)—as many of the works of the Romantic period attest. And, as Turner asks, "What was more 'natural' than beasts? Their paucity of reasoning power only enhanced their symbolic role as emblems of feeling. Moreover, since they exhibited many of the same emotions as people, they served as a very direct way of linking man with nature through the ties of feeling" (33).

10 Thomas's *Man and the Natural World* provides an informative history of these and other cultural influences upon the period's changing attitudes about animals (see 92-191). In contrast to Thomas's arguably more linear view of this history, Harriet Ritvo sees the Romantic-Victorian period as one of paradoxical

attitudes and actions towards animals, suggesting both "change in human-animal relations in Britain" as well as "stasis" ("Animals" 108). Indeed few even among those most concerned about animal welfare appear ever to have made a connection between the meat they consumed and the animal suffering they deplored. For the upper classes in England meat continued to be a desired staple (Black 5-7).

11 John Berger argues that in fact animals have always (if less noticeably) been "central" to those cultural processes by which human beings "form an image of themselves" out of a system of differences (2)—and never more so, never more openly and even desperately so, I would add, than in the Romantic era in Britain. In "Eating Well" Jacques Derrida similarly describes human subjectivity as the product of a "schema" of animal speculation and sacrifice, exchange and consumption (113). By this accounting, Western culture can be said to be at its core a shifting economy of physical and symbolical animal exchange—again, at no time more so in Britain than at the turn of the century.

12 All citations from Coleridge's poetry follow the texts of the poems in *The Complete Poetical Works*, excepting those poems by Coleridge, such as his earliest version of *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, included in his and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*.

13 For a helpful historical justification of Coleridge's and Southey's scheme, circa 1792-94, to escape to the banks of the Susquehanna, see Rosemary Ashton's *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 52.

14 David Perkins agrees that "[t]he term 'brother' encoded the[se] Revolutionary ideal[s]" (929). His reading of the poem's "radical politics" as self-consciously exposing Coleridge's and others' democratic sentiments "to mockery" (941) is, however, quite different from my own. It is worth noting that the poem's emphasis on "fellowship" created by sorrow and on the hardening effects of poverty and slavery further connected the speaker's hail to contemporary reformist tenets and concerns, themselves tied to later anti-cruelty acts.

15 According to James McKusick, Coleridge's "unique contribution" to his collaboration with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads* was his "ecolinguistic" conception of language as "holistic" and organic—a view indebted to eighteenth-century natural history (392).

16 Kroeber similarly argues that the poem "warns that one distorts the truths of natural being when one projects into external nature [one's] narcissistic feelings" (73).

17 According to Elizabeth A. Lawrence, the phrase "jug jug" signifies the "harsh guttural sounds" produced in the nightingale's song (25). She describes that song "as a rich, extraordinarily vigorous virtuoso performance that includes mournful, almost sobbing notes" (22).

18 Regarding the scene's relationship between father and son and its disruption of the poem's "associationist premises," see Anya Taylor's "'A Father's Tale': Coleridge Foretells the Life of Hartley," esp. 38-39. Timothy P. Enright offers a different reading of this turn to Hartley: as a means of self-authorization against poetic tradition and imitation (497-98).

19 Drawing upon the work of the late Jean-François Lyotard, Andrew R. Smith states that "contemplation of communicability presupposes that the one contemplating is already a part of the *sensus communis* instantiated by the feeling" (342). In this respect my reading of Coleridge's poem is consonant with Regina Hewitt's own in *The Possibilities of Society*, although Hewitt sees the text's community of listeners as rejecting the conceit of melancholy largely "because it suggests discontinuity" and an absence of "harmony" (70). I find human and animal difference to be a greater source of social cohesion in the poem than is either similarity or harmony.

20 On the intertextual connections between Coleridge's poem—specifically its description of the water-snakes—and Erasmus Darwin's "The Economy of Vegetation" in his Linnaean-influenced *Botanic Garden*,

see Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature* 154. Cf. Trevor H. Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature* 11-13. Onno Dag Oerlemans's essay "'The Meanest Thing that Feels': Anthropomorphizing Animals in Romanticism" provides a different reading of Coleridge's representation of animals in the poem (see 17-20).

21 The similarity is striking between the moral of Coleridge's poem and the sentiments of *Goody Two-Shoes*: "These are GOD Almighty's creatures as well as we. He made both them and us . . . so that they are our fellow Tenants of the Globe" (68). Perkins describes several other late-eighteenth-century instances of this popular notion "of loving sympathy with all creatures," including those proclaimed in Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories* (1786) and E. A. Kendall's *Keeper's Travels in Search of His Master* (1798). See Perkins (930-32).

22 On a source in Schiller for this setting, see Norman Fruman, *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel* (322-23). Fruman also discerns Wordsworthian influences in much of the poem. Regarding the text's drive toward hermeneutic reconciliation, especially in its later, revised versions, see Tim Fulford, *Coleridge's Figurative Language*, 62-73. Enright reads both this ballad and "The Nightingale" as poems troubled by their derivative and inauthentic status (see, for example, 494-96).

23 See Raimonda Modiano, esp. 482-501.

24 Cf. Walter Reed. Reed's analysis of works by Kafka and by Blake reveals how animals often lurk behind and inform religious ritual.

25 Wordsworth began *Home at Grasmere* in the spring of 1800, and, as the Cornell edition's editor Beth Darlington contends, a number of passages "clearly express events and feelings of March and April, 1800" (8). The two episodes I consider refer back to this time, and may well have been drafted in 1800, as Kenneth R. Johnston contends (85-91). In this regard, see also Jonathan Wordsworth (17-29). The text's earliest complete manuscript, "B," was not completed until after a long lull, in 1806; hence the poem's double dating here (1800, 1806) to designate its earliest and final dates of composition.

26 Perkins cites the standard commentary on this reference to a "milder day": as referring to "a future time when . . . 'all mankind' (l. 256) will share the 'blessedness' (l. 254) that the poet and his sister now know in Grasmere" ("Wordsworth" 443). Perkins finds this reading problematical in its overly sympathetic view of humanity—a humanity shown in the poem to be prone to murderous hunting (444-45). In fact the "intimation" the Wordsworths receive is primarily one of blessings for their imminent dwelling in the vale; only secondarily, by virtue of their "trust" (l. 255), do they perceive this "love and knowledge" as having the power to bring "blessedness . . . hereafter" to humankind.

27 Modiano interestingly interprets the episode of the missing swans in terms of its "active involvement in the elaboration of a non-violent framework of exchange, that of the gift, which secures momentary relief from violence"—although she also declares that the swans "must die to secure his and Dorothy's survival" (512, 483). Bruce Clarke comments on the strange manner in which at this textual midpoint a surmise of death "intrude[s]," and argues that the swans' disappearance in fact is owed to their symbolic displacement by this pair of new human arrivals (370-71). My interpretation of the episode owes a considerable debt to Clarke, to Modiano, and to readings of the scene by Johnston (89-92) and William A. Ulmer (70).

28 One famous instance of a call *un*answered is of course Wordsworth's previously mentioned poem "There was a Boy," from *Lyrical Ballads*, in which the Boy of Winander's owl-calls occasionally receive no response. His resulting "gentle shock of mild surprize" (l. 19) seems in the subsequent version of the text, incorporated in *The Prelude*, to be associated with his death, making him, in this case, the sacrifice to be mourned.

29 Potts also argues that in this "important period of transition" the Enlightenment's and post-Enlightenment's "formalised conventions of [animal] picturing" came increasingly to be seen as either "irrelevant or detrimental to the cognitive content of a naturalistic visual depiction" (28). In short, both the order and ordering of things had changed. See also Ritvo, "New Presbyter or Old Priest?" 272-74.

Romanticism & Ecology

Gender, Environment, and Imperialism in William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*[*]

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Important note: This essay contains hypertext links to The William Blake Archive. Please read the conditions of access listed on the Archive's Welcome Page before *using the links provided below.*

1. As numerous critics have noted in passing, William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) explicitly correlates Bromion's brutal appropriation and rape of Oothoon's body with a figurative but no less violent "rape" of the natural world.[1] It is this correlation and some of its philosophical implications that I will examine here in detail; for, somewhat like Albion in Blake's late prophecies, Oothoon represents in *Visions* both a person and a landscape, and nothing can happen to her human portion that does not also affect the environmental aspect of her identity. Hence, while *Visions* deals primarily with the issue of human slavery (in its related patriarchal and colonial contexts), it is also very much concerned with the parallel conquest and "enslavement" of nature, the methodical extension of what the Baconian philosopher Joseph Glanville was pleased to call, in his *Plus Ultra* of 1668, "the *Empire* of *Man* over *inferior* Creatures" (188).[2]

2. At the opening of *Visions*, we abruptly learn that the "ENSLAV'D ... Daughters of Albion" send "sighs toward America," and that the woeful Oothoon similarly longs for America's "soft soul" (1:1-3).[3] Clearly, what these enslaved characters long for is political emancipation, the opportunity to live according to the libertarian ideals commonly associated with the American Revolution. What is less apparent is the geo-generic aspect of *Visions*' references to America: the characters' implicit understanding of America as an idyllic pastoral retreat. Historically, as Leo Marx has noted, the age of discovery introduced into the Arcadian myth "a note of topographical realism," and, from the Elizabethan era until the late nineteenth century, Europeans tended to view America in Arcadian terms as a vast and unspoiled garden of "'incredible abundance'" (Marx 47, 37-40).[4] From such an idealizing standpoint, the New World becomes a truly green and pleasant land, a pristine space wherein political freedom is supported in part by nature's Edenic plenitude.

3. At the time that Blake wrote and engraved *Visions*, however, America was hardly as free and gentle as such idealism would have it. On the contrary, as *Visions* emphatically demonstrates, America's pastoral image helped to disguise the fact that much of its colonial prosperity depended upon slavery and the relentless expropriation of Indigenous lands. If, as numerous critics have argued, Oothoon's plight in *Visions* allegorizes not only the condition of British women under the yoke of patriarchy but also the plight of the New World's enslaved blacks and oppressed Native Americans,[5] she is also at one level of Blake's allegory the indivisible body and "soul of America" itself, a vital "continent longing ... to be cultivated by free men, not slaves or slave drivers" (Erdman, *Prophet* 227). Hence, when Bromion rapes Oothoon, he violates and expropriates both her human portion *and* its related environmental aspect. Such violence is implicit in Bromion's arrogant post-rape address to Oothoon:

> Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south:
> Stampt with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun:
> They are obedient, they resist not[.]
> (1:20-22)

Since the eighteenth century, the word "rape" has often been used to describe human acts of environmental plunder and destruction,[6] a terminological employment that suggests, as ecofeminist writer Susan Griffin observes, "a profound connection between the social construction of nature and the social construction of woman" (225). While Blake never directly employs the word "rape" in *Visions*, he could not have been oblivious to the Enlightenment rhetoric that described scientific inquiry—which Bacon believed would restore humanity to its originary position of "empire" over nature—as a "penetration" of nature's "womb" (*Novum Organum* 114, 50, 100).[7] In *Visions*, however, Blake further complicates this equation of sexual and environmental violence by considering it in light of a colonialist racism that enslaves non-Europeans, forcing them to become the very instruments of environmental subjugation in the New World. Thus, when Bromion brags of his slaves that "They are obedient, they resist not," his grammatically ambiguous plural pronouns can be seen to gesture not only toward the antecedent "swarthy children of the sun" but also toward the "soft" or pliable landscapes he expropriates in the previous line. Clearly, Bromion sees his mastery of humans and landscapes as roughly equivalent: both, he suggests, offer themselves *willingly* to his authority. Given the overt violence of his imperialist rapacity, however, we must see in Bromion's self-aggrandizing myth of total mastery an underlying element of fear and paranoia; for, to revisit Griffin's discussion of rape in its sexual and environmental significations, "why does one have to conquer what is not challenging, fearsome, and in some way, wild, falling as it does outside the idea of mastery and control?" (225). Undoubtedly, Bromion's rape of Oothoon involves a complex and multifaceted act of sexual, cultural, and environmental conquest.

4. In order to stabilize his overarching authority over Oothoon, Bromion resorts to the age-old practice of stereotyping, accusing Oothoon of "harlot[ry]" (1:18, 2:1). As an exercise of power, this stereotyping has complex and ambivalent implications; but its immediate consequences are dire. First of all, we must recall that, traditionally, "women called whores or who are prostitutes are not 'protected' by other men from rape" (Griffin 224); hence, by depicting Oothoon as a harlot, Bromion, her rapist, effectively robs her of recourse to protective justice. Second, Bromion's stereotyping encourages Theotormon to reject Oothoon's freely proffered love as a manifestation of harlotry and "defilement," a rejection that drives her almost to despair. Subsequently, Oothoon proceeds to defend herself from the accusation of "impurity" by marshalling numerous rhetorically powerful arguments from nature; but, as readers have often noted, this strategy of argumentation is decidedly perilous. In attempting to prove her moral and sexual purity by way of reference to the world of nature, Oothoon seems unaware, among other things, that contemporary thinkers often accused Dame Nature herself of harlotry.[8]

5. While Bromion's deployment of the harlot stereotype helps him to consolidate his brutal authority over Oothoon's body (in both its human and terrestrial aspects), his stereotyping also inadvertently demonstrates the discursive ambivalence of his position as an agent of patriarchy and imperialism in *Visions*. As Homi K. Bhabha has argued, the stereotype, as a structure of predication, is fraught with contradiction: on the one hand, it is supposed to articulate a naturalized, self-evident truth, something that "goes without saying"; and yet, the fact that the stereotype depends upon continual reiteration (as in Bromion's repeated reference to Oothoon's harlotry) suggests that its authority is always less than comfortably stable. Hence, in a discussion that is highly relevant to the sexual/colonial allegory of *Visions*, Bhabha remarks that "the stereotype . . . is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated," as if the ostensibly self-evident truths it attests to "can never really, in discourse, be proved" (66).

6. An illuminating contemporary instance of the ambivalence of colonialist stereotyping can be found in what critics widely acknowledge as one of the major textual sources for *Visions*, Captain John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition, Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796), for

which Blake engraved approximately fourteen illustrations just prior to composing and etching *Visions*.[9] In a discussion of Surinamese sexual practice, Stedman touches upon many of the sexual concerns and issues Blake addresses in *Visions*: false modesty, chastity, adultery, harlotry, and the uninhibited gratification of sexual desire. Although in the unpublished version of *Narrative* Stedman privately fears that his observations "will be highly censured by the Sedate European Matrons" (1790; 47), he nevertheless candidly remarks, in a published passage worth quoting at length, that in colonial Surinam most European men acquire female slave-mistresses. These women, Stedman claims,

> all exult in the circumstance of living with an European, whom in general they serve with the utmost tenderness and fidelity, and tacitly reprove those numerous *fair-ones* who break through ties more sacred and solemn. Young women of this depiction cannot indeed be married . . . as most of them are born or trained up in a state of slavery; and so little is this practice condemned, that while they continue faithful and constant to the partner by whom they are chosen, they are countenanced and encouraged by their nearest relations and friends, who call this a lawful marriage, nay, even the clergy avail themselves of this custom without restraint. . . . Many of the sable-coloured beauties will however follow their own *penchant* without any restraint whatever, refusing with contempt the golden bribes of some, while on others they bestow their favours for a dram or a broken tobacco-pipe, if not for nothing. (1796; 1.25-26)

Based on the evidence offered in *Visions*, one might speculate that Blake would have perused this passage (if he had in fact read Stedman's text[10]) with a certain amount of qualified admiration and approval. Just as the enslaved Oothoon roundly condemns the "subtil modesty" of the "modest virgin knowing to dissemble / With nets found under thy night pillow, to catch virgin joy, / And brand it with the name of whore" (6:7, 10-12), Stedman subtly condemns the hypocrisy of the many "*fair-ones*" of Europe whose pretended feminine modesty, his italics more than hint, is at odds with their actual sexual desires and practices. Indeed, by "follow[ing] their own [sexual] *penchant* without any restraint whatever," the "sable-coloured beauties" of Stedman's narrative behave very much like Blake's Oothoon, who actively and unashamedly seeks sexual gratification with Theotormon, one of her colonialist oppressors. A glance at the unpublished version of Stedman's text is even more revealing. Here, just as Oothoon indicts "hypocrite modesty" (6:16)—and not the active pursuit of sexual desire—as the true model of "selfish" harlotry (6:16-20), Stedman's slave-women do "not hesitate . . . to pronounce as Harlots" those who refuse to follow the "laudable Example" of a sexuality that seeks unrestrained gratification (1790; 48).

7. But when Stedman concludes the unpublished version of his panegyric to the sexuality of Surinamese slave-mistresses by calling these women "the disinterested Daughters of pure Nature" (1790; 48), he reveals the philosophical subtext supporting his heavily revised published argument, invoking in the process the kind of idealistic primitivism that greatly troubled and often offended Blake. Not only does such idealism efface the historical actuality of the female slaves' parentage (since these women are "mostly . . . creole" [1790; 47], they are primarily the daughters not of nature but of female African slaves and male European slave-masters like Bromion); by invoking the concept of "pure Nature" (and thus the various nature/culture dualisms that the concept tended to carry in the late eighteenth century), Stedman's ethnographic discourse on sexuality implicitly supports age-old stereotypes associating women and black people with corporeality rather than spirit, emotion rather than reason, licentiousness rather than license. Finally, it is important to note the generic influences on Stedman's sexual ethnography, for in its implicit tendency to locate corruption in the colonial metropolis and "purity" or freedom in the green world of Surinam, Stedman's discussion partakes of the apparent dichotomy of the pastoral idyll, which, by distinguishing country from city (and, by extension, nature from culture), tends often to efface the ideological practices inevitably constituting our views of the "natural" world.

8. Certainly Oothoon finds it impossible in *Visions* to convince her beloved Theotormon that the physical body—or the natural world of which it is a material part—can be "pure." In stark contrast to Bromion (who represents the overtly sensual, gluttonously appetitive, and perversely self-gratifying aspect of European colonialism), Theotormon is grimly ascetic,[11] his moralizings aligning him in *Visions*' colonial allegory with a self-righteous and hypocritical imperialist evangelism. His distance from all things deemed natural and his obsession with a distant, disengaged, and otherworldly sky-God are implicit in his very name (whose roots, *theos* and *thereos*, mean "God" and "spectator" respectively [Hoerner 132]). A devoted follower of the *via negativa*, the "negative way" of ascetic consciousness, Theotormon believes he must deny all things earthly, including especially the "natural" impulses comprising his sensual aspect, in order to achieve his ultimate goal of union with a "wholly other" God. Theotormon's ascetic disavowal of corporeality causes him to prefer solitude over socially engaged action (7:10), a behavioral preference culminating in his strangely narcissistic obsession with his own internal thought processes (3:23; 4:3-11). It is appropriate, then, that Blake's design to plate 1 (the frontispiece in most copies of *Visions*) depicts Theotormon in a crouching position, arms covering his eyes, ears, and mouth, completely closed to the life of the senses (Gillham 195).

9. This is not to suggest that Theotormon's asceticism is successful or without important contradiction. Crucially, for example, Blake figures Theotormon's original response to Oothoon's ostensible harlotry in terms of *earthly* phenomena: "Then storms rent Theotormons limbs; he rolld his waves around. / And folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair" (2:3-4). While Theotormon is clearly subject in these lines to "natural" passions (figured by the violent "storms" that rend his limbs), his subsequent ability to manipulate the waves and waters raised by these internal storms evinces a significant degree of control over this aspect of his identity. But he achieves this self-mastery at a significant price. Because his God is entirely transcendent, Theotormon must completely deny the visionary and redemptive possibilities of material existence, possibilities suggested among other things by Oothoon's complex proposition that "every thing that lives is holy" (8:10). According to Theotormon's negative theology, in other words, all of nature's seeming attractions can only be distractions; and since he has learned to see his passions as aspects of natural rather than spiritual being, he must constantly "cleanse" himself via acts of self-expurgation and penance. Hence, in the design to plate 9, Theotormon flagellates his body with a three-thonged whip, whose knots, as Erdman has noted, "look uncannily like the heads of the Marygold flowers" in the design to plate 3 (*Illuminated* 134)—iconographic evidence that the natural forms inspiring multiplicitous vision in Oothoon (see 1:6-7) can only be vehicles of self-torment for Theotormon. Significantly, after binding Oothoon and Bromion "back to back in Bromions caves," Theotormon assumes a position at the cave's entrance, where he sits "wearing the threshold hard / With secret tears" (2:5-7). Theotormon's tears are "secret," for, as a practitioner of asceticism, he must deny his emotions, which he attributes to the sensual or embodied portion of being. Such denial thus becomes another form of self-mortification as Theotormon "wear[s] the threshold hard," figuratively clothing himself in a penitential garment of stone—a version of the ascetic's hairshirt—whose petrific, impenetrable surface signifies Theotormon's extreme self-enclosure, his unwillingness to entertain any open encounter with earthly otherness.

10. There can be no doubt that Oothoon is severely traumatized by the violation and stereotyping she undergoes at the hands of Bromion, as well as by Theotormon's self-righteous and insensitive treatment of her. Consider, for example, her subsequent invocation of Theotormon's eagles:

> I call with holy voice! kings of the sounding air,
> Rend away this defiled bosom that I may reflect.
> The image of Theotormon on my pure transparent breast.
> The Eagles at her call descend & rend their bleeding prey . . . .
> (2:14-17)

In this passage, Oothoon's rhetoric of purity and defilement reveals her unwitting capitulation to Theotormon's ascetic dualism (which opposes chastity to harlotry), while her use of the verb "rend" in her instruction to Theotormon's eagles implies, most appallingly, an invited repetition of Bromion's act of rape. Indeed, since Bromion's earlier rending of Oothoon with his clamorous "thunders" (1:16) implies a regal exercise of elemental control, we may align him directly with Theotormon's eagles, the "kings of the *sounding* air." Hence, while highlighting the mutual implication of Theotormon's theology and Bromion's colonialist praxis, Oothoon's invocation of and encounter with the eagles demonstrates the extent to which her own pursuit of "purity" tends inadvertently to presuppose and perpetuate the most profound violence.

11. Such violence recalls the eagle's traditional figural association with imperialist politics. During the course of Western history, this predatory bird had served emblematic functions in such countries as Rome, Austria, France, Germany, and Russia; and, in 1782, only eleven years prior to the production of *Visions*, the United States adopted the eagle as emblem for its official seal (Vogler 30-31n). Since at one level of *Visions*' political allegory Oothoon is America, and since Bromion rapaciously expropriates her "soft American plains" and the regions comprising her "north & south" to his material empire, we must consider the eagle in *Visions* as a figure for empire, the political and geographical entity before which colonized individuals must "open their hearts" or be forcefully "rent" in opposition. Hence, in both the text and in the design to plate 6 the eagles' rending of Oothoon's breast functions to emphasize the latter's political subjection. In this context, "the soft soul of America"—America's liberatory idealism—is devoured by the brutal reality of America as a burgeoning empire being built upon the backs, and written in the blood, of slaves.

12. It is most appropriate, then, that Oothoon's account of her rending by the predatory eagles is directly preceded on plate 5 by an illustration of a black slave-laborer, whom Blake depicts nearly prostrate upon the ground, lying beside an almost horizontal, grotesquely blighted tree. In the approximate symmetry of their spatial design, these juxtaposed human and arboreal figures evince an iconographic equation. On the one hand, the oppressed slave, valued primarily as a physical instrument of enforced labor, is reduced to the status of a mere natural object (like the tree), becoming, from the master's standpoint, simply another aspect of the exploitable physical environment. (Blake further emphasizes this process of "othering" by depicting the slave's arms in such a manner that they appear to be rooted, like tree limbs, to the ground.) On the other hand, insofar as the near-horizontal form of the blighted tree in turn mirrors the prostrate form of the slave, the tree can be seen to represent a natural world that has, like the African laborer, been destructively enslaved. The message seems straightforward enough. As competing imperial powers rush to exploit new resource-bases, importing to the New World the mercantilist practice of human slavery, the environmental problems Blake associates with the metropolitan center—a place of "cities turrets & towers & domes / Whose smoke destroy[s] the pleasant gardens & whose running Kennels / Chok[e] the bright rivers" (FZ 9:167-69; E390)—are extended to the New World's colonized landscapes.

13. In a context wherein the transcendental eagle of imperialist politics emblematizes the violation of enslaved peoples *and* landscapes, all creatures—both human and non-human—are potentially affected. Consider, for example, the figural significance of *Visions*' "jealous dolphins," the creatures Bromion invites to "sport around" Oothoon directly after he rapes her (1:19). How, one might ask, do dolphins—traditional symbols of philanthropy, love, and salvation (Baine 206)—come to be so negatively anthropomorphized in Blake's allegory of colonialism? To seek an answer to this question, it will be helpful to return to Stedman's *Narrative*. In recounting the events of his voyage from Europe to Dutch Guiana, Stedman writes that the interval was rendered "exceedingly pleasant ... by the many *dolphins* or *dorados*, ... beautiful fish [which] seem to take peculiar delight in sporting around the vessels" (1796; 1.9). (Notice that Blake's dolphins also "sport around" in *Visions*.) Continuing his discussion in a more philosophical mode, Stedman goes on to remark that

> The *real* dolphin, which is of the cetaceous kind, was *anciently* celebrated in poetic story on account of its philanthropy and other supposed virtues: but to the dorado or dolphin of the *moderns*, this character is far from being applicable, this fish being extremely voracious and destructive, and is known to follow the ships, and exhibit his sports and gambols, not from attachment to mankind, but from the more selfish motive of procuring food.... The circumstance which chiefly entitles the dorado to our attention is, the unrivalled and dazzling brilliancy of its colours in the water, the whole of its back ... appear[ing] as bespangled all over with jewels.... (1796; 1.9-10)[12]

Stedman's alignment of the "real dolphin" with poetic sensibility offers a helpful clue concerning the way Oothoon would likely view the ostensibly less poetic dorado. Since Oothoon is "Open," in *Visions*, "to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears" (6:22), we can speculate that she would not debase this "dolphin of the moderns," as Stedman does when he attributes selfishness to it, but would find in its "unrivalled and dazzling" beauty a superlative source of joy and delight. Indeed, such an aesthetic would help to explain how poetic sensibility comes to anthropomorphize beautiful animals as "philanthropists"; for in contexts where non-human creatures inspire "joy and ... delight," they may be regarded quite logically as agents of human well-being. Unlike Oothoon, however, the empire-obsessed Bromion is driven to denounce and destroy "virgin joy" (6:11); and the "delights" he is capable of understanding are only those "of the merchant" (5:12). Because Bromion is a stranger to beauty and philanthropic impulse, his "modern" anthropomorphisms (to borrow Stedman's term) reflect the inevitable selfishness and paranoia of empire, so that even such beautiful creatures as dolphins become representatives of a *mis*anthropic "jealous[y]."

14. As we have seen, however, not all of Oothoon's encounters with non-human creatures are positive ones. Since Oothoon has been colonized by Bromion in *Visions*' political allegory, and since, to a certain extent, colonialism proceeds via a pedagogical "colonizing of the mind,"[13] we might expect Oothoon's worldview—including her discourse on non-human nature—to be adversely affected by her situation. Such influence, at any rate, would help to explain why Oothoon becomes obsessed with conceptual categories like "purity" and "defilement" in *Visions*, and why her own view of animals comes to reflect these categories (a reflection we have noted, for example, in her sadomasochistic view of predatory eagles as agents of her own purification). But Oothoon is no colonialist automaton, and she is by no means unaware that her physical enslavement has harmful ideological dimensions and ramifications. Thus she attacks her cultural conditioning on the most fundamental of levels.

> They told me that the night & day were all that I could see;
> They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up.
> And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle.
> And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round globe hot burning
> Till all from life I was obliterated and erased.
> (2:30-34)

Here, in a nutshell, is Oothoon's critique of the epistemology of empire, the *empir*icism that attempts to consolidate an "empire of man" over all other creatures. Her reference to "night & day" underscores the divisiveness of Western categorical thought, which conceptualizes existence according to binary oppositions (night/day, black/white, slave/master, defilement/purity, animal/human, etc.) and which can tolerate no liminal or "grey" areas. Hence, while Oothoon's reference to "five senses" has been read as a metaphysical indictment of "the body as prison of the soul" (Moss 14), the grammar of the passage suggests the validity of a more overtly political interpretation. Foregrounding the pedagogical aspect of colonialist discourse, Oothoon speaks of what "They told me . . . to inclose me up," thus gesturing toward a political intention, a methodical denial of other (non-empirical, non-European) modes of

knowledge carried out *in order* to subjugate and imprison ("*to* inclose . . . up") enslaved peoples. Crucially, the final result of this process is a distinctively *narrative* denial, in which Oothoon's cultural "life" is "ob-literated and erased."

15. For his own part, however, Bromion attempts to deny this violence by representing both his naturalist theory and colonialist praxis as modes of *visionary* endeavor:

> Then Bromion said: and shook the cavern with his lamentation
> Thou knowest that the ancient trees seen by thine eyes have fruit;
> But knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
> To gratify senses unknown? trees beasts and birds unknown:
> Unknown, not unpercievd, spread in the infinite microscope,
> In places yet unvisited by the voyager. and in worlds
> Over another kind of seas, and in atmospheres unknown . . . .
> (4:12-18)

By declaring that this lamentation "shook the cavern," Blake's narrator acknowledges Bromion's prophetic potential, raising the possibility that even this degenerate imperialist has the power to level the walls of the "caves" in which he and Oothoon have been "Bound back to back" since the second plate of the poem (2:5; see design to plate 1), Bromion's reference to "senses unknown" reinforces the passage's visionary quality, implying as it does the epistemological necessity of sensory expansion or cleansing. Moreover, as Mark Bracher observes, Bromion's figurative gesture toward "another *kind* of seas" seems "on the verge of escaping the empiricist bias for the manifest and tangible" (173). These interesting possibilities are subtly belied, however, by Bromion's reference to "the infinite microscope," which underscores the empirical basis of his vision. As John Locke remarks in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), if one's visual perception were "1000, or 1000000 [times] more acute than it is now by the best Microscope," one "would be in a quite different World from other People: Nothing would appear the same . . . the visible *Ideas* of everything would be different" (qtd. in Raine 2.125). Engaging in this sort of Lockean speculation, Bromion's discourse of discovery—his optimistic belief in a revelatory correlation between "unknown" aspects of the human sensorium and "unknown" elements in the objective world—represents what Blake would likely have decried as an empirical co-optation of revelatory vision. Ultimately, Bromion's optimism is based on his confidence in Enlightenment progress, which, by perfecting the instruments and methods of empirical inquiry, would give humanity unprecedented access to things and places only currently beyond apprehension.

16. More revealing, perhaps, than any other aspect of his speech on the knower and the known are Bromion's claims that "trees and fruits flourish upon the earth / To gratify senses unknown," and that such gratification brings the ultimate reward, "the joys of riches and ease" (4:14-15, 21). Here, we might pause to consider Blake's nearly contemporary poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, wherein the prophet Ezekiel asks "is he honest who resists his genius or conscience. only for the sake of present *ease or gratification*?" (*MHH* 13; E39; emphasis added). The opposition Ezekiel establishes between "honest[y]" and "ease or gratification" in this rhetorical question is crucially important, especially if we bear in mind the distinctively Blakean claims that "Every honest man is a Prophet" (Anno. Watson E617) and that "the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God" (*MHH* 12; E38). Clearly, from a Blakean standpoint, Bromion's selfishness perverts or disqualifies the prophetic aspect of his utterance. A confirmed utilitarian, Bromion considers existence hedonistically, believing that one comes to know a thing by divining the many "senses unknown" in which it may be harnessed to the ends of an all-encompassing self-gratification. Embracing such an ideology, one responds to otherness, in short, by negating it in subsumption to the self.

17. Bromion's instrumental evaluation of "trees beasts and birds unknown ... In places yet unvisited by the

voyager" highlights the issue of European imperialist expansion, finding, once again, illuminating parallels in Stedman's *Narrative*. In one of his geographical descriptions, Stedman characterizes Dutch Guiana as a territory "enriched with a great variety of mineral substances," a land where "in general the soil is abundantly fruitful, the earth during the whole of the year [being] adorned with continual verdure, the trees loaded at the same time with blossoms and ripe fruit..." (1796; 1.34, 33). While such pastoral evocations tend to confirm the popular image of the New World as an Edenic garden, thus enticing European readers with the promise of unlimited prosperity in an idyllic New World landscape, they are ultimately qualified by Stedman's colonialist tendency to celebrate only geographical areas considered instrumentally valuable. Indeed, as far as Stedman is concerned, resource-based wealth and natural beauty go hand in hand. Hence, those areas that are "inhabited by Europeans, and cultivated with sugar, cocoa, cotton, and indigo plantations ... form the most delightful prospects that can be imagined" (1796; 1.36-37), while places unsuited for slave-based, plantation-style agriculture are implicitly praiseworthy only for the value of their exploitable timber and minerals. As for locations inaccessible to European navigation, they are quite simply "of little consequence to Europeans" (1796; 1.35)—or downright harmful to colonial interests (as in the case of heavily forested wilderness areas, which provided both real and potential sanctuary for escaped rebel slaves [1796; 1.3-4]). Like Blake's Bromion, Stedman implicitly values "newly discovered" lands only for their potential to increase the personal wealth, and to gratify the material desires, of their European masters.

18. As a major contributing illustrator for Stedman's *Narrative*, Blake would likely have been struck not only by the work's manifold discussions of human slavery (which Blake's commentators have examined in detail) but also by its impressive pictorial and textual catalogues of "trees and fruits . . . beasts and birds unknown" (VDA 4:14-15). Like many contemporary writers of "exploration literature" and New World ethnography, Stedman takes care extensively to catalogue the plant, insect, and animal life he encounters in his travels; and more than half of *Narrative*'s eighty-one engraved illustrations deal with botanical and zoological subject matter (Blake himself having depicted, in at least four engravings, four species of monkey, a giant Aboma snake, some Limes, the Capsicum Mamee Apple, and various nuts). In its careful taxonomy of nature, Stedman's published text participates in the expansion of European naturalistic empire by extending knowledge of, and thus a certain mastery over, the terrains and topographies of the New World. Moreover, the text's intermixing of naturalist and ethnographic subject matter—highlighted most explicitly in Stedman's figurative description of the celebrated slave-girl Joanna as a "forsaken plant" (1796; 1.90)—draws an implicit parallel between the European objectification of plants and animals, on the one hand, and the objectification of human beings, on the other, each of which are valuable to the empire primarily in an instrumental capacity. It is hardly surprising, then, that Blake's Bromion, who wishes to subject all things to the taxonomizing scrutiny of his phallic "infinite microscope," ultimately finishes his lecture on the marvels of nature by celebrating "the joys of riches and ease" in a world that is monolithically governed by "one law for both the lion and the ox" (4:21-22).

19. By examining parallels between human and environmental subjugation in *Visions*, I do not mean to efface crucial differences, nor do I wish to suggest that human slavery is a mere aspect of our treatment of nature (especially since colonialist discourses have often aligned non-European peoples with a "degenerate" nature in order morally to justify the subjugation of the former as an integral part of an ostensibly benevolent "civilizing mission"). However, because Oothoon herself fights for human liberty by deploying in the poem a series of arguments based on non-human exempla, *Visions*, I believe, demands a sustained focus on the relationship between colonialist and anti-colonialist treatments of humanity and nature. Consider, for example, the following passage, in which Oothoon attempts to combat Bromion's homogenizing imperialism by invoking the multiplicitous realm of animality:

> With what sense is it that the chicken shuns the ravenous hawk?
> With what sense does the tame pigeon measure out the expanse?

> With what sense does the bee form cells? have not the mouse & frog
> Eyes and ears and sense of touch? yet are their habitations.
> And their pursuits, as different as their forms and as their joys:
> Ask the wild ass why he refuses burdens: and the meek camel
> Why he loves man: is it because of eye ear mouth or skin
> Or breathing nostrils? No. for these the wolf and tyger have.
> Ask the blind worm the secrets of the grave, and why her spires
> Love to curl round the bones of death; and ask the rav'nous snake
> Where she gets poison: & the wing'd eagle why he loves the sun
> And then tell me the thoughts of man, that have been hid of old.
> (3:2-13)

In this remarkable passage, Oothoon attempts to derive what Blake's friend Henry Fuseli referred to as animals' "allegoric Utility" (qtd. in Bentley 170). The logic informing her argument is as follows: If the heterogeneous behaviors and pursuits of non-human creatures cannot be entirely accounted for by way of reference to "eye ear mouth ... skin" and "breathing nostrils," then neither should human behavior be understood simply in terms of sensual responses to pre-given empirical data—especially if Oothoon is correct in her implicit claim that human actions, like the human brain, are potentially "infinite" (2:32) in scope. But while Oothoon exploits the "allegoric utility" of animals to support her arguments for human emancipation, she does not do so in an arrogantly anthropocentric way. Indeed, according to the rhetorical structure of her argument, an open-minded inquiry into the nature of non-human being provides a prerequisite basis for *human* self-reflection: first we are to consider the otherness and difference of animals, "And *then*," Oothoon declares, we may "tell [her] the thoughts of man." At the very least, she suggests, "man" must be understood *contextually*, not as an abstract, conceptually pure category of being.

20. Kathleen Raine has argued convincingly that Oothoon's discourse on animals and sensory perception owes an intertextual debt to Emanuel Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences,[14] which posits a correlation between an entity's "Internal" makeup and the actions it undertakes in the "External" world. Here is an excerpt from Swedenborg's summary of the matter:

> [T]here is in every Thing an Internal and an External, and . . . the External dependeth on the Internal, as the Body does on its Soul . . . . For the Illustration of this Truth it may suffice to consider a few Particulars respecting a Silkworm, [and] a Bee . . . . The Internal of the Silkworm is that, by Virtue whereof its External is impelled to spin its silken Web, and afterwards to assume Wings like a Butterfly and fly abroad. The Internal of a Bee is that, by Virtue whereof its External is impelled to suck Honey out of Flowers, and to construct waxen Cells after a wonderful Form . . . . (Swedenborg 2.417)

By arguing that every creature's "External dependeth on the Internal," Swedenborg, like Oothoon, grants priority to an intrinsic rather than extrinsic makeup of being,[15] implying possibilities of perception that Bromion's empiricist doctrine of the "five senses" refuses to sanction. Accordingly, individuals are centers of dynamic activity, not mere, passive receptors of externally imposed sensations. But where Swedenborg uses a vaguely deterministic vocabulary to speak of creaturely activity (stating that bees and silkworms are "impelled" to behave in certain ways), Blake's Oothoon chooses to speak of such activity in terms of multiplicitous "joys" and "loves" (3:6, 8, 11-12), terms carrying connotations of freedom rather than coercion or enslavement. By attributing the delights of joy and love to non-human creatures, Oothoon not only avoids the determinism implicit in Swedenborg's notion of creaturely impulsion; she also problematizes the influential Cartesian hypothesis that animals are soulless automata, ultimately incapable of experiencing either pleasure or

pain. Moreover, by relentlessly particularizing animals—by emphasizing that "their habitations" and "pursuits" are "as different as their forms and as their joys" (3:5-6)—Oothoon's counter-discourse strives to deconstruct the homogenizing concept of animality itself, thus challenging Bromion's philosophical claim that there can be "one law for both the lion and the ox" (4:22). Rigorously undertaken, such a deconstruction would have the most profound social and environmental implications; for, as Jacques Derrida observes, the concept of animality presupposes the drawing of an oppositional limit which "*itself* blurs the differences, the différance and the differences, not only between man and animal, but among animal societies, and, within the animal societies and within human society itself, so many differences" (183).[16] In *Visions*, Blake's Oothoon combats the all-encompassing violence of colonialism via a conceptual multiplication of difference in its manifold cultural *and* ecological manifestations. She aims, in short, to convince her listeners to respect and celebrate what renowned biologist E. O. Wilson calls "the diversity of life" (passim).

21. As if to combat the violent rapacity of Bromion's monolithic imperialism, Oothoon deploys a sexual metaphor to represent her experience of life in the multiplicitous world she envisions. She is, she declares,

> Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears
> If in the morning sun I find it: there my eyes are fix'd
> In happy copulation; if in evening mild, wearied with work;
> Sit on a bank and draw the pleasures of this free born joy.
> (6:22-7:2)

Oothoon's "openness" and her use of the term "copulation" to characterize her encounter with beauty recall early modern concepts of the eye as a sexual organ, a kind of optic vagina through which the mind was thought to be "impregnated" by visual stimuli.[17] In Blake's poetics, however, these figures of openness and copulation also carry spiritual connotations, since they anticipate *Jerusalem*'s highly privileged and implicitly sexualized concept of Eternal emanational encounter, wherein discrete and integral individuals meet in a process of "mutual interchange," "comingl[ing]" ecstatically "from the Head even to the Feet" (see *J* 88:3-11, E246; 69:43, E223). Such profound interchange is implicit in Oothoon's rhetorical synaesthesia. By figuring her visual perception of beauty in terms of copulative touch, Oothoon articulates an imaginative alternative to the oppositional subject/object dynamic so often associated with the economy of the gaze. When perceptual vision is understood as a mode of touch, the distance separating perceiver and perceived is conceptually minimized, imaginatively bringing subjects and objects into the most proximate, mutually affective relationality. What is more, Oothoon's metaphor of visual or visionary copulation mitigates against the dualism of an Enlightenment philosophy that represents mentality rather than biology as "characteristic of the human and . . . what is 'fully and authentically' human" (Plumwood 169); for, by conceptualizing aesthetic apprehension in terms of sexual communion, her metaphor strives imaginatively to bring human biological and mental aspects into a kind of reconciliatory unison.

22. And yet, Oothoon's subsequent cry, "Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the mountain wind!" (7:16), encodes in its repetitions and multiple exclamation points a degree of hyperbolical protestation that, rather than conveying prophetic confidence in her vision of unbridled consummation with otherness, suggests trauma and hysteria. It is difficult, in other words, not to see Oothoon's overly emphatic cry as the compensatory reaction of a brutalized, insulted, and enslaved being trying desperately to regain the optimism of an earlier innocence. Such a state of affairs would, at any rate, help to account for the disconcertingly problematic scenario Oothoon imagines as a viable alternative to Theotormon's "hypocrite modesty," the "self-love that envies all" (6:16; 7:21):

> But silken nets and traps of adamant will Oothoon spread,

And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold;
I'll lie beside thee on a bank & view their wanton play
In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon:
Red as the rosy morning, lustful as the first born beam,
Oothoon shall view his dear delight, nor e'er with jealous cloud
Come in the heaven of generous love; nor selfish blightings bring.
(7:23-29)

While this passage is syntactically ambivalent and therefore difficult to interpret with precision,[18] it nevertheless seems very much at odds with the emancipatory politics Oothoon articulates earlier in the poem. As Leopold Damrosch, Jr., observes (198), Oothoon's "silken nets and traps of adamant" troublingly recall the religious "nets & gins & traps" (5:18) she so emphatically denounces earlier in the poem, mechanisms used "to catch virgin joy, / And brand it with the name of whore" (6:11-12). Furthermore, the narcissistic aspect of her fantasy not only servilely defers or denies the gratification of her *own* sexual desire; by foregoing her own participatory touch in the encounter, Oothoon's narcissism also contradicts her earlier synaesthetic ideal of visual-tactile copulation. Far from liberating herself from the tyranny of systemic sexual oppression, Oothoon seems unwittingly willing to perpetuate it and, as procuress, to extend it (and the stereotype of harlotry) to other innocent "girls,"[19] whose associations with "silver" and "gold" suggest something of their commodification in Oothoon's sexual fantasy.

23. In the subsequent lines of the poem, however, Oothoon invokes precious metals in order forcefully to indict, and to remark the dire consequences of, a cultural milieu that reduces all things—whether human or otherwise—to the instrumental status of commodity; and it is here that the revolutionary tones of her earlier environmental and sociopolitical critique begin to reassert themselves.

Does the sun walk in glorious raiment. on the secret floor
Where the cold miser spreads his gold? or does the bright cloud drop
On his stone threshold? does his eye behold the beam that brings
Expansion to the eye of pity? or will he bind himself
Beside the ox to thy hard furrow? does that mild beam blot
The bat, the owl, the glowing tyger, and the king of night.
(7:30-8:5)

Oothoon's miser is, residually, an alchemist: though his "cold[ness]" suggests that he has lost all sense of alchemical creative wonder, he nevertheless wishes to convert all things to gold. Insofar as the pursuit of this homogeneous substance provides the binding "one law" of his existence, he resembles the Urizenic Bromion; but to the extent that his fetishistic hoarding of gold necessitates a renunciation of all self-expenditure and a paranoid withdrawal from society (which must be seen as a source of expense or potential thievery), he resembles the withdrawn and virtue-hoarding Theotormon (who, like the miser, is also associated with a "threshold" of stone [2:6]). One would hardly expect such antisocial behavior in an era of so-called enlightenment, whose "mild beam" promises humanistically to bring "Expansion to the eye of pity."[20] But, as the sun's "glorious raiment" is replaced by the merely reflective light of a "bright cloud," the "mild beam" of human sympathy gives way before the questionable lustre of the miser's gold (which signifies, in *Visions*' imperialist context, the stolen wealth comprising the so-called commonwealth). Under such conditions, humanity's "mild beam" is darkened to opacity, becoming that biblical mote of motes, the obstructing "beam" in the eye of self-righteous and hypocritical avarice (Matt. 7.3-5).

24. Writing on the relationship between enlightenment and imperialism in his 1796 treatise *Illustrations of*

Prophecy, Joseph Lomas Towers posed a question that can help us to appreciate the urgency of this ethical dilemma: "Are we not apprized," he asked, "that the guilt of nations, as well as of individuals, is enhanced in proportion to the degree of light and knowledge which heaven has vouchsafed them?" (1.xv). Living in an era of unprecedented "light and knowledge," but failing to behold "the beam that brings / Expansion to the eye of pity," Oothoon's miser becomes a figure for the culpability of an empire whose practices of cultural exploitation and slavery are decidedly at odds with its professed morality. Not only does the miser's unenlightened avarice disable sympathetic identification with other humans; his ironically named "mild beam" also disables any sympathetic concern for the natural environment and its non-human inhabitants, "blot[ting]," as it does, "The bat, the owl, the glowing tyger, and the king of night." According to Oothoon, for whom "every thing that lives is holy" (8:10), even these ominously nocturnal creatures—indeed, even the symbolically decried "wild snake," whose presence in the Garden augured the loss of Judeo-Christian paradise (8:7)—are worthy of respect.

25. Unfortunately, Oothoon's revolutionary vision is easily co-opted. After all, has not Bromion's empirical science, in surveying its proper domain, already laid claim to the objective universe? And does not this science plan to subject "every thing that lives" to the authority of its scrutinizing gaze? Moreover, has not Theotormon's institutionalized religion long denied the holiness of nature in order to claim exclusive, God-given right to define the nature of "holiness"? Indeed, in asserting the holiness of *every* living thing, Oothoon articulates a pluralism that has no recourse to exclusionary tactics, no effective strategy for separating the goats of tyranny from the lambs of righteousness. Hence, by Oothoon's own standards, even Bromion and Theotormon are holy and, therefore, worthy of respect. While Oothoon's philosophy is thus generously free of *ressentiment*, it runs the risk of political self-sabotage, for to respect representatives of tyranny is to remain potentially subject to their authority. Such a state of affairs might, perhaps, account for the rather grim scenario Blake depicts in *Visions*' concluding lines:

> Thus every morning wails Oothoon. but Theotormon sits
> Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire.
> The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs.
> (8:11-13)

Ending with its all-too-familiar refrain of echoed sighs (cf. 2:20, 5:2), *Visions* seems ultimately to have resolved nothing. Hence, the tendency of some readers to regard Oothoon as a "failed prophet" (Anderson passim). One must note, however, that Oothoon utters at the poem's conclusion more than just despairingly impotent sighs. She also emphatically "wails"—obtrusively expressing the profundity of her sorrow and dissatisfaction—each and "every morning" (8:11), demonstrating in the process her unflagging "determination to awaken those around her" (Linkin 192). Alongside her inability to achieve timely emancipation for herself and the Daughters, Oothoon's failure to convert or reform her oppressors in fact *typifies* the prophetic condition. To quote Robert Gray's contemporary discussion of biblical prophecy, "the prophets evinced the integrity of their characters, by zealously encountering oppression, hatred, and death.... Then it was, that they firmly supported trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were . . . destitute, afflicted, tormented" (qtd. in Towers 2.325). Refusing a premature and facile apocalypticism, *Visions* soberly acknowledges the complex difficulties attending its social and environmental crises. Ending the poem without resolution, in other words, Blake places ultimate responsibility for political transformation upon his readers, forcing us not only to confront Oothoon's woes but to dwell upon them, hoping, it seems, that we will do more than merely "eccho back her sighs."

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Notes

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1 See, for example, Nancy Moore Goslee, "Slavery and Sexual Character," page 108; David Punter, "Blake, Trauma and the Female," pages 483-484; Brian Wilkie, *Blake's Thel and Oothoon*, page 65; Mark Bracher, "Metaphysical Grounds of Oppression," page 167; and Laura Haigwood, "Blake's Visions," page 99.

2 For additional comments concerning the human right of "dominion" or "empire" over nature, Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (114) and René Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (119). See also Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy*, Chapter Two.

3 All references to Blake's writing are to David V. Erdman's edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. In my parenthetical citations I refer first to plate and line numbers (for example, 1:20-21) and second, where appropriate, to the page number where the citation occurs in the Erdman edition (for example, E46). In my citations I also make use of the following abbreviations, where necessary, to signify individual works: MHH (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*); VDA (*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*); FZ (*The Four Zoas*); J (*Jerusalem*); Anno. (*Annotations*). All references to Blake's poetic designs for *Visions* are to Copy J, reproduced both in Erdman's *Illuminated Blake* and on-line in *The William Blake Archive*. My plate numbering follows the order established by Erdman.

4 Here Marx quotes Captain Arthur Barlowe, who uses the "abundant garden" image to describe his first impression of Virginia in 1754. Marx points out that the "ecological image" of America as a bountiful garden was accompanied historically by the less romantic image, embraced by New England's Puritan settlers, of America as a "hideous wilderness" that needed to be conquered and tamed (42-43).

5 See, for example, Erdman, *Prophet*, page 239; John Howard, *Infernal Poetics*, pages 97 and 102; and Steven Vine, "That Mild Beam," page 58.

6 As early as 1721, one of the possible significations of "rape" was "To rob, strip, plunder (a place)" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

7 For an astute discussion of the sexual politics informing Enlightenment science's effort to assert an all-

encompassing human dominion over nature, see Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, Chapter 7.

8 For a relevant discussion of the relationship between botany and sexual morality in the 1790s, see Alan Bewell's "Jacobin Plants," especially pages 133-134. See also Erasmus Darwin's "Loves of the Plants" (in *The Botanic Garden*), which represents a number of plant species as "harlots" (e.g., 1.133, 3.259-264).

9 In this essay I discuss both the unpublished version and the extensively revised published version of Stedman's *Narrative*. I differentiate these versions herein by indicating the following dates in my parenthetical citations: 1790 for the unpublished manuscript and 1796 for the final, published text.

10 Among the names mentioned in the subscription list for Stedman's published text is "BLAKE (Mr. Wm.) London."

11 The marked opposition between the fiercely appetitive Bromion and the obsessively ascetic Theotormon suggests the pertinence of D. G. Gillham's thesis that these characters represent "two aspects of a single divided being" (195).

12 In the 1790 manuscript, Stedman does not differentiate the dolphin from the dorado. Rather, he represents these creatures as members of a single dolphin species, a species subject to divergent ancient and modern evaluations only because of historical changes in human perspective and sensibility (1790; 31-32).

13 I adapt this phrase from the Kenyan revolutionary author Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who argues at length that the cultural emancipation of African peoples must proceed in part via a pedagogical "decolonization" of the mind. See *Decolonising the Mind*, especially pages 28-29. See also Wole Soyinka's *Myth, Literature and the African World*, page viii.

14 See Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 2, pages 127 to 128.

15 On the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic models of being in *Visions*, see Mark Bracher's "The Metaphysical Grounds of Oppression," especially page 169.

16 For Derrida's discussion of animality, I am indebted to David L. Clark, "On Being 'The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany': Dwelling with Animals after Levinas," pages 172-173.

17 See Joseph Lenz, "Base Trade," page 841. As Lenz points out, Roger Bacon and Vesalius (in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively), composed drawings of the eye that resembled contemporary drawings of female reproductive organs.

18 On the passage's syntactical ambiguity, see Harriet Kramer Linkin, "Revisioning Blake's Oothoon," page 190. For a convincing discussion of the problems attending a "fixed" interpretation of this passage, see Fred Hoerner, "Prolific Reflections," pages 147-149. And, for the possibility that Oothoon speaks of copulation figuratively rather than literally, see James A. W. Heffernan, "Blake's Oothoon," page 11.

19 See Laura Haigwood, "Blake's Visions," page 104.

20 I am indebted here to Steven Vine's suggestion that the figure of the "mild beam" signifies the "ambiguous power of enlightenment." See Vine, "That Mild Beam," page 60.

Romanticism & Ecology

"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" as an Ambient Poem; a Study of a Dialectical Image; with Some Remarks on Coleridge and Wordsworth

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The spacious ambience of nature when treated with respect, allows physical and emotional freedom; it is an outdoor room essential to thought and untraumatic (that is, relatively unforced) development.
—Geoffrey Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture*, p. 158

"The Star"

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveller in the dark,
Thanks you for your tiny spark:
He could not see which way to go,
If you did not twinkle so.

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often through my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye,
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveller in the dark,
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

- Jane Taylor

Introduction

1. In his article on the ways in which orientalist visual art disrupts the difference between figure and ground, Nigel Leask employs William Galperin's work on panoramas to show how Romantic orientalist scenes were based upon an "absorptive" aesthetic (Leask 166-7, 169-75).[1] I contend that this absorptive aesthetic resides not only in the visual, but also in the other perceptual dimensions; and that it is caught up in, but also goes beyond, orientalism, as recently demonstrated in *The Poetics of Spice* (Morton, *Spice* chapter 5). In fact, as I show here, it complicates relationships between orientalist

landscape and domestic pastoral, and moreover between the local and the global. I call it ambience, and it turns out that this aesthetic provides a novel way of reading literature with a mind for ecology. This essay contributes to a fresh approach, a playful attempt to open discussion concerning the nature of "green" Romantic poetry. It is incomplete, but it is offered in the hope that it might point out further avenues of study. It forms part of my forthcoming book project, tentatively entitled *Ambience: Aesthetics, Private Property and Public Space; a Study in Ecocriticism*. To a large extent, the essay continues the line of thought explored in David Simpson's *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real*, especially the final section, "Societies of Figures."

2. It is lamentably little-known that one of the world's most famous nursery rhymes is a Romantic poem; not only that, but as I will argue in this essay, a special kind of Romantic-ecological poem that I have chosen to call *ambient*. Furthermore, it is a strong example of a feminine Romantic lineage; though this is a poem by a woman, I hesitate to say that it is "female," especially insofar as one might note similar poetic phenomena in Keats and Shelley, and for that matter Coleridge and Wordsworth. A close analysis of this poem will help to reconceive Romantic ecological poetry, which so far has been notoriously both masculine and male.

3. As is common in ambient poetry, the poem deconstructs the metaphysical opposition between writing and nature commonly found in Romantic-ecological discourse. It negotiates between the global and the local, terms often placed in too rigid an opposition to one another in Romanticist discourse. By offering a form of "portable localism," a strategic essentialism, the poem traverses the general and the particular. Moreover, its matter is not the physical conquest of an objectified earth, but the sonic and graphic location of the subject in a world. It is about as unmilitaristic as one could imagine, short of evaporating the subject in a haze of nihilism. The poem is a nursery rhyme called "The Star" by Jane Taylor (1783-1824).

4. I demonstrate that a soft, "feminine" form of ecological awareness is legible even in the poet often established as the lynchpin of masculine Romanticism, William Wordsworth (Fay 80-92, 180-9, 214-26; Ross; Mellor; Morton chapter 5).[2] If this is valid, then ambience is truly a dialectical image, in the sense meant by Walter Benjamin: an image that is capable of being read both "with" and "against" the "grain" of dominant ideologies. The dialectical image of ambience will help us to redefine the Romantic period's representation of nature, and it is in this light that I read the Ancient Mariner's encounter with the water snakes.

Why ambient poetry?

5. One may pose differently the question of the distinction between person and environment: what if people were more like environments? If James Lovelock noted that the weather worked like a person (Lovelock 1-12), why not imagine a person as being like the weather? In other words, perhaps one might deconstruct personhood into ambience, atmosphere, surroundings, dwelling, environment. . . This would provide a more appropriate philosophical view (I am reluctant to say "ontological foundation") for a deep ecology, an ecology that could assume that a politics of the environment must be coterminous with a change in the view of those who exist in/as that environment. A poetry that articulated the person as environment would not invert anthropocentrism into "ecocentrism," it would thoroughly undo the notion of a center.

6. Is there any poetic evidence for the possibility of this deconstruction of the opposition of personhood and environment in the Romantic period? Jerome McGann's *The Poetics of Sensibility*, while risking essentialism and a kind of inverted sexism, suggests that there were indeed kinds of poetry in the Romantic period that ignored, for the most part, the masculine drama of subjectivity and objectivity in

which traditional Romantic aesthetics has been caught, especially in its transcendental idealist articulations. Women Romantic poets were noted for a more embodied poetics than this, declares McGann (136-49), a poetics that infused the mind and body in a somewhat counter-dualistic fashion. One of the problems of Romantic ecology has been its almost complete lack of attention to women Romantic poets. This lack of attention is a symptom of the ideological frame in which Romantic ecology is caught: an outdoorsy masculinity that resists both intellectuality and femininity.

7. "The Star" is both indoors and outdoors, taking apart the difference between feminized interior domestic space and masculinized exterior work space; the comforting implication is that what is outside is also inside—the star peeps through the curtain; the discomforting implication is that what is inside is really just a special instance of the outside—that subjectivity itself is a lonely traveler wandering under the stars. "The Star" succeeds in being both intimate and alien, and thus it is not so much rigidly anti-anthropocentric as it is deconstructively deep-ecological. It enacts a non-essentialist awareness of the interdependence of subject and object, perceiver and perceived: an environmental awareness.

8. Deep ecology proposes that if ecological politics is to succeed, a truly ecological subjectivity needs to be established. It is in this spirit that I offer the notion of ambience for consideration. In teaching classes on literature and ecology, I have noticed that ecological sentiment often entails a lot of guilt, which reinforces subject-object dualism, which is toxic to the environment; and so forth. Guilt, as Slavoj Zizek has observed, reproduces the illusion of a metalinguistic vantage point outside one's world: the confident vulgar poststructuralist cliché that "there is no metalanguage" is asserted from just such a position; and so is the guilt that is only a sniff away from the White Man's Burden (Zizek, *Sublime Object* 154-5; *Tarrying* 213-4). I have therefore temporarily given up teaching classes directly about ecology. Instead I have been working with students to explore awareness of space, or better, spaciousness. For in order to have an environment, one must have a space to have it in. And in order to have environmental awareness, one must be aware of space as more than just a vacuum. One must start taking note of, taking care of, one's world.

Domesticity, women's poetry, and public space

9. Let us consider more closely the notions of space with which the poem works. Jane Taylor's lyrics were published in *Rhymes for the Nursery* (1806). Alan Richardson has observed that books for children, including nursery rhymes, were luxury objects produced during the birth of a consumer society in eighteenth-century Britain, as charted by McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (Richardson 154, 165). Though its content is primarily primitivist in its calculated naiveté, "The Star"'s form as a commodity is one of sophisticated luxury, training the child to enjoy consumerism. This notion of luxury is encoded in the poem's diction, however, by the "diamond" simile (4), the kind of figure which Mary Louise Pratt has associated with imperial representation (Pratt 204). The hesitation between luxury and primitivism, between artifice and nature, is a productive (and deconstructive) feature both of this poem and, surprisingly, of Wordsworthian Romanticism, even though that discourse ostensibly runs against the eighteenth-century discourse of luxury (see the argument below on Wordsworth and the *Arabian Nights*).

10. Carol Shiner Wilson argues that while Taylor's poetry celebrates the domestic art of needlework in the service of the patriarchy (though not unambiguously), her "correspondence reveals a profound ambivalence towards domesticity" (Wilson 179). Writing and sewing or weaving have been interrelated at least since Sappho. In Taylor's work, these processes are implicated together in complex ways.[3] Writing may surpass weaving as a labor of value, or vice versa (179-80). Joel Haefner has shown how poetry evoking Sappho in the Romantic period is situated either in the drawing room or in "A

domesticated natural world" (Haefner 270). The superposition of these is what Haefner calls "an intimate public space" (272); one might go so far as to say that the nursery (the putative location of "The Star"), was such a space as this, traversed by children, governesses and parents.

11. Taylor admired the public nature of Corrine and Mme de Staël (Wilson 180). For Haefner, Corinne performs in "public and semi-public spaces"—of which a good example would be the salon (Haefner 268). This puts Taylor in contrast with Barbauld and Edgeworth, for whom there is "little tension between domesticity and artistic creation" (Wilson 180). The tension is far from ideologically neutral. Wilson points out that in Cowper's *The Task*—a paradigm for the sentimental construction of nature in the later eighteenth century—the sofa is the site of "female industry" (165) that the narrator turns from "to the serious business of composing poetry outdoors among real flowers" (168). In "The Star" the narrator is poised between conventional gendered boundaries between inside and outside. Wilson makes the bold statement that "In women's writing, both child and mother-teacher are socially located, a significant contrast to the Maternal Nature in the canonical male poets" (171). But it is the radical ambiguity of this location—reducible perhaps to the threshold, the window frame through which the reader may construe the narrator's view of the star—that is at issue. Writing in the *Arcades* project about the liminal spaces of Parisian capitalism in the nineteenth century, Walter Benjamin observes that the threshold, in its substantiality (it too fills space), is far more ambiguous a notion than the idea of a boundary (Benjamin 856). "The Star," itself caught in the commodity culture of consumer society, is, pertinently, a meditation on liminality—here and there, near and far, inside and outside.

12. Taylor's poetry engages in complex ways with the similarities and differences between domestic and public space, and this complexity bears upon her value for ecocriticism. Is the natural world to be construed as an *oikos*, a dwelling modeled on domestic space, as economic metaphors of household management imply from deism to Haeckel? Recently such domestic figures have underpinned conservative political economy, as Milton Friedman, for Reagan and Thatcher, displaced John Maynard Keynes. What is ignored in the idea of nature as household is what gets expressed as an ideological feature of republicanism, whose relationship with capitalism has often been problematic. This ideological feature is precisely a negotiation between public and private space. It is the fantasy image of the garden or the salon, what Geoffrey Hartman calls an "outdoor room" (see the epigraph). To conceive of nature as *oikos* irons out this disturbing wrinkle in the metaphysical opposition of inside and outside, on which depend conservative notions of political economy as household management. There is an aesthetic dimension in which the fantasy object of republican thought escapes its capitalist frame. What it gestures towards is collective rather than private space, and yet an introverted space of contemplation and quiet, like Andrew Marvell's garden, rather than of extraverted noise and bustle (Francis Bacon's idol of the marketplace). Taylor's "The Star" poses the question: is it possible to obtain a space that is simultaneously *collective* and *contemplative*?

Deconstructing subject-object dualism

13. What is an ambient poem? My research for *The Poetics of Spice* has indicated that just as the musician Brian Eno hypothesized in the mid-1970s that there could be an ambient music, one might imagine an ambient poetry, and that moreover this poetry is of special significant in the Romantic period.

14. The story of ambient music is something like this. Having survived a car accident, Eno lay in bed unable to listen fully to the record player; a fault had made it play at very low volumes, volumes at which the sound content of the LP was minimized to an almost infinitesimally (in)audible degree. Inspired by this, Eno set about recording music deliberately designed to evoke and/or take place in an "atmosphere," space whose quality had become minimally significant, as one would tint a clear glass or introduce a faint perfume into the surrounding air. The traditional Western view of music sets up an

opposition between foreground sound and "background" noise—sounds that are precisely not foregrounded, as Jacques Attali has concisely demonstrated. Rather than this, Eno proposed that music deconstruct the opposition between foreground and background, or more precisely, between figure and ground. There are Western precedences for such a deconstruction, for example in the work of the medieval music theorist Johannes Tinctoris (Page 1-31). But the sources of ambient music may more properly be traced to orientalist views of non-European ways of experiencing time and space, which affected European music in its Romantic phase.

15. David Toop charts the sources for this kind of music as far back as Claude Debussy's visit to the Paris Exposition in 1889, at which he heard the Indonesian Gamelan (Toop 13-22). This was a musical performance whose repetitious structure, improvisational openness and ceremonial properties pointed out a realm of sound entirely different from the teleological, secularized and commodified music heard in nineteenth-century European concert halls. Western discourses, however, have always contained alternative views of what could be done with sound, image and text, views that pertained to figurations of space which employed a more minimal, a more paradoxical, or no notion of dualism between subject and object.

16. If the tune for "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" is a "folk" tune, it is a paradoxical one: a folk tune with a cosmopolitan reach. The traditional tune associated with "The Star" is "Ah! Vous Dirai-Je, Maman," that appeared without words in a 1761 Paris publication, M. Bouin's *Les Amusements d'une Heure et Demy*. The tune was adapted by Mozart: *Twelve Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, maman"* was published 1785 by Christoph Torricella in *Aira Variée*; according to Fuld, "Beethoven improvised on the theme in his second public concert in Prague in 1798." Fuld states further that "The song came to be sung as *ABCDEFG* under the title "The Schoolmaster" in 1834." A similar tune has been set to "Baa, Baa Black Sheep," the words for which appeared in print in about 1744 in *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*. The tune is also used in the German "Ist das nicht ein Schnitzelbank? [carpenter's bench]" (593-4).[4]

17. The form of the tune seems banal in its simplicity. It is an ABBA arch of diatonic (traditionally European, post-medieval) harmony that pivots on an opposition between tonic and dominant (the first and fifth notes of the diatonic scale). This is a minimalist version of classical harmony, the harmony with which Mozart and early Beethoven worked. Reminiscent of a modern orchestra tuning up (playing scales, fourths and fifths), or indeed of a child's first experiments with an instrument—surely this is why it became the tune for *ABCDEFG* (an "instrument" of language)—it brings to the fore, like so many of the elements of the lyrics of "The Star," the perceptual-aesthetic dimension in which it is performed. In a word, it is ambient.

18. The Romantic period is often thought to be the moment during which the world became especially story-shaped, and if not entirely teleological, then playing with the notions of ends and beginnings in the ways suggested by the "to be continued" openness of the Romance genre. Naturally, it is evident that the notion of ambience may get caught like a deer in the headlights of a postmodern luxury product, its denial of reified time (the historical destiny of the West) in the name of reified space. This is very much the destiny (pun intended) put upon it by Brian Eno. But if it could be shown that a certain articulation of space (subjective and objective genitive) coexisted with the Romanticizing of time, readers could uncover a whole arena of Romantic experience. Ambience could be shown to *resist* the reification of space in capitalism. For like all dialectical images, ambience at once fills and overspills the ideological frame intended for it by the social structure in which it emerged. Why? Because ambience is what Jacques Lacan would call a *sinthome*, a metastasized kernel of inconsistent and meaningless enjoyment to which any linguistic frame would sit loose (Zizek, *Looking Awry* 132, 135-7; *Sublime Object* 74-5, 76-9).[5] I have modified the view of the *sinthome* insofar as what Lacan

applies to an objectal substance could, in an invagination, apply to surrounding space itself. This involves a topological inversion of figure and ground. Imagine the *sinthome* (the best image would be an open wound) not as figure but as ground: a potent, non-neutral ground, a giant stain.[6]

19. This is why I have chosen to call this essay "a study of a dialectical image." In the work of Walter Benjamin, the images thrown up by capitalism always have some revolutionary potential, if only one knew how to crack them open aright. While it is evocative of the ways in which the world has been covered in flat concrete, shopping malls, vast airports and parking lots, ambience may also provide paradoxical images of a collapse of dualism, disclosing a world where oppositions between human being and nature are erased.

20. The Romantic period is also often construed as the apogee of the (masculine) ego, that psychic foreground of modernity, articulated against the background of nature, history, being, and so forth. It is moreover the period in which repetition was literally denigrated in favor of a raced sense of temporality. Hegel's racist philosophy took umbrage at what it construed as the repetitive nature of African culture, fearing the collapse of Western "historical" linearity into this repetition (Snead 75).[7] It would be disruptive, then, to find evidence in the Romantic period of an entirely other order of aesthetic experience, an order based on repetition and spatiality. This would be of special interest to Romantic ecology. One of the tricky things about using the "big six" male poets (notably Wordsworth, or all of them from a certain Wordsworthian view) as indices of ecological sensibility, is just how much they appear to insist upon the notion that the self is independent of its world. This figure is linked to the capitalist ideology of abstract freedom, as opposed to the democratic notion of inalienable rights, a view that is in excess of the mode of production that produced it.

21. This ideology of separateness, while revolutionary at times, constantly broaches the possibility of ecological destruction, violence and ignorance. To love and care for nature, in this view, would be to have to find some way to treat it like a person. But if people are attenuated to abstract freedom, what kinds of people are they? And the abstract freedom of personhood is always predicated on a concrete/phenomenal ground. Thus the separation of figure and ground must be maintained for the ideology of personhood to persist. The ecological thinker is thus caught in paradox.

22. Because this paradox is historically derived, it would be a mistake to confuse the ways in which indigenous cultures treat animals and plants as "people" with an anthropocentrism produced by the idea of abstract freedom. The primitivism of the Romantic view of children suggests that their ontogeny recapitulates cultural phylogeny. The child as shamanic "primitive," is a view that Richardson has shown to be specifically Wordsworthian in its construction of a disempowering "Poetics of Innocence" (Richardson 142-53, esp. 118, 126). It is tempting to condemn lines in "The Star" like "In the dark blue sky you keep, / And often through my curtains peep" (13-14) as nothing but instances of an anthropomorphic and anthropocentric pathetic fallacy. Indeed, the whole poem, whose dominant trope is apostrophe, may be condemned in this way. But there are some reasons to hesitate to do this. What is going on when children are allowed to experience stars as "you" but adults are not? "You" could evoke a political view of nature, despite the observation that the Romantic "indigenizing" of the child is meant to distance them from politics. Moreover, the star's identity is suspended in the sky of the narrator's wondering. If it is anthropomorphic, it is minimally so. In conclusion, is the extent to which literary history condemns anthropomorphism and the pathetic fallacy the extent to which the society in which it exists is imperialist (Hartman 38-9, 67-8; see McGann 76-77)?

Paganism and environment: the question of Wordsworth

23. Let us turn our attention to a writer whose work attempts in part to disrupt what is defined as a

superficial anthropomorphism, in the name of a poetics that would resist commodity culture. Wordsworth's engagement with the ways in which poems could become consumer objects was not entirely happy. "The World is too much with us . . . getting and spending we lay waste our powers": significantly Wordsworth figures an enervating consumerism not as alienating distance but as threatening proximity, its supplementarity pressing on the authentic self. This is therapeutic Romanticism, designed to cure the ills of the Enlightenment and capitalism (notably the consumer side):

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
> This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
> The Winds that will be howling at all hours
> And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
> For this, for every thing, we are out of tune;
> It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea;
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.
> (Wordsworth, *Poems* 7)

However authentically indigenous the narrator wishes to be—and how much can that be given the cosmopolitan language of Classical deities?—the narrator is also invoking a more ornamental (in Wordsworth's mind less indigenous) form of poetry.[8] The up-gathered winds "like sleeping flowers" are also the rhetorical flowers of ornamentation that Wordsworth's masculinist poetics holds in abeyance.

24. There is, however, a suggestion of a fresher poetics in the very phrase "like sleeping flowers." As an invocation of potential energy, the phrase is far from "out of tune" with the natural world. The reader is informed that they are not moved by such phenomena, but surely this is an *occupatio*, a favorite Romantic trope. We have already been moved by the time we are informed of this. The sleeping flowers are minimally personified, bestowing in their quiet secrecy a stronger appreciation for the ambient world than the trite Triton (surely something of a pun). We will shortly return to Wordsworth's engagement with the aesthetics of the commodity form, but first we shall investigate more closely the salient features of ambient poetics.

Three aspects of ambient poetics

25. We have established that ambient poetry deconstructs the difference between figure and ground. In the following three sections, an outline is presented of three specific linguistic effects of ambience: minimalism; the lingual voice; and contact as content.

1. Minimalism: the oral and the lingual

26. The element of ambient poetry we have just observed is its concern for minimization (of expression, content or both), which it shares with ambient music. Eno's gramophone was just barely audible. So in the same way ambient poetry makes certain features of reality just perceptible (but nevertheless, they are perceptible). I describe this as minimal signification, and I use Jacques Derrida's notion of the re-

mark to delineate this (Derrida, *Dissemination* 54, 104, 205, 208, 222, 253). The re-mark is that mark that designates a set of marks as such: the mark that differentiates between figure and ground. Zizek explains:

> in any series of marks there is always at least one which functions as "empty," "asemic"—that is to say, which re-marks the differential space of the inscription of marks. It is only through the gesture of re-marking that a mark becomes mark, since it is only the re-mark which opens and sustains the place of its inscription . . . (Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do* 75)

When Woodstock "speaks" in the Charlie Brown cartoons, the only reason we can ascertain that the little strokes of black are his speech is the speech bubble around them. This is a minimized degree of speech, not a metaphysical zero-degree (a structuralist concept) but an *infinitesimal* degree. It is thus not correct to agree with the physicist Brian Greene, who designates the letter as the zero degree of language (Greene 141). "Language-ness," the notion that we are in the presence of language, can get along without letters. This is what ambient poetics seeks to convey. The effect this art produces is not unlike the notion of "quantum fluctuation," a ripple in apparently empty space that re-marks it: a minimalist explanation of the origin of the universe (Zizek, *Remainder* 229-31, Greene 127-9). Taylor's "Twinkle" is an enactment of this linguistic quantum fluctuation; and "Twinkle, twinkle" even more so. "Twinkle" is practically an onomatopoeia of this fluctuation, if that were not a paradoxical concept that suggested a collision of graphic and sonic elements. Let us consider this further.

27. In the mouth, the explosion of "Twin" and the swallow of "kle" present an illusion of language in a minimal, on-off (digital) state. By "language," however, we would here have to include Lacan's idea of "llanguage, lalangue"—the meaningless fluctuation of tongue-enjoyment (Zizek, *Remainder* 99-103, 108-9). This meaningless fluctuation is the presence of the Lacanian Real in language. This is the Real observed in the mouth in Lacan's reading of Freud's story of the dream of Irma's injection (Freud, *Interpretation* 106-20; Lacan 196).[9] The illusion of binarism—that "twin" is "1" and "kle" is "0"—is undermined by the inescapably analogue nature of the voice: the mouth and tongue that makes "kle" is there. It is what Cixous would call the "soufflé" (Cixous 93-4). The deliquescent "medium" of the voice (in the sense of breath, tongue, lips, mouth cavity, saliva . . . an inexhaustible list) is then an analogue, in the performance of the word "twinkle," for the ambient atmosphere in which stars do twinkle (see the section below, "Placing 'The Star' "). The medium has become the message, in a paradoxical fusion. Voice in Taylor, then, is not to be thought of as beckoning towards phonocentrism (Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*). "Twinkle" indicates how the lingual—my word for the analogue medium, the ambient dimension, of language—betrays the oral. The *lingual voice* is my translation of Michel Chion's term, the "voix acousmatique," discussed in the following subsection.

2. The lingual voice

28. The infant addressee of "The Star" experiences the mother's voice not as metaphysical *presence*, but as *ambience*. How may we account for this theoretically? The second element of ambient poetry is what I have decided to call *rendu*, after Chion's view of certain kinds of movie in which a special feature of the filmic medium itself is taken as an aspect of its content (Chion 109-11). The making of the medium into a message I take to be a prime condition of ambient poetry.

29. One of the more conventional kinds of *rendu* is what Chion calls the *voix acousmatique*, commonly employed as the voice-over: "sounds one hears without seeing their originating cause" (Chion 71-3). This voice is not disembodied but the reverse: *a voice without a subject*. Far from being the phonocentric locus of the logos, as in certain versions of deconstructive theory, this voice is a disturbingly asignifying element of language, which floats free of its content and form. The

existentially horrific (or blissful) presence of the voice that floats without a subject and without speech is remarked upon by Zizek in his analysis of Chion (Zizek, *Looking Awry* 40, 82, 93, 126-7).[10]

30. This lingual voice is present in "The Star" as the singing voice of the carer who sings the lullaby; in the Romantic period indubitably a woman's voice. The voice that floats around the text looking for an object (wondering as it wanders) is the very medium in which the poem, as lullaby, is enacted. This voice is more disturbingly present in Charlotte Smith's great sonnet, "Written in the Churchyard at Middleton in Sussex." The voice that overwhelms that poem finds an object in the raging sea, and this is truly Smith's proclamation of a greatness that is more than conventionally human.

3. Contact as content

31. In ambient poetics, the medium in which communication takes place becomes the message that is communicated. In the terms of the structuralist Roman Jakobson's "Closing Statement," the contact becomes the content in ambient literature (Jakobson 355-6). "The Star" exists in a specific performative context: it is a lullaby. It is thus to some extent an illocutionary statement, a statement designed to perform a direct effect as would a spell, a mantra or the "so be it" of "Amen." The repetition of the repetitious "Twinkle, twinkle" in perhaps an imperative mood at the end of the poem (the mood slips between indicative and imperative) is the conjuration of the world in language, a world that hesitates between subject and object. Moreover, illocutionary statement are strictly context specific. As a non-priest, I cannot say "I now pronounce you man and wife" to a pair of strangers on top of a London bus and have my words mean anything.

32. The *atmosphere* in which the message exists—its ambience—is a significant element of its meaning. In fact, its context *is* its meaning; to use the six-part model of communication proposed by Jakobson, the *contact* (the medium in which the message takes place) has become the *message* (Jakobson 350-77). The poem "The Star" is its background: the voice of a nurturer (typically one assumes a mother or nurse) lulling a child in its bedroom. It is worth reflecting for a moment on what a powerful tool Jakobson's six-part model of communication is for describing ambient poetry. Jakobson derived the term "phatic" (for communications that foreground the contact) from Malinowski's work on meaning in "primitive" languages. Recapitulating phylogeny as ontogeny, Jakobson states that the phatic is "the first verbal function acquired by infants; they are prone to communicate before being able to send or receive informative communication" (356).

33. This is one reason why Lewis Carroll saw fit to parody "The Star" at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party:

> Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
> How I wonder what you're at!
> Up above the world you fly,
> Like a tea-tray in the sky.
> (98-99)[11]

The phatic quality of the original means that its phonemes and graphemes may be substituted for others, in the best tradition of nonsense verse. Carroll continues: "Here the Dormouse shook itself, and began to sing in its sleep '*Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle* -' and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop" (99). The Dormouse's minimalist repetition also attests to the phatic dimension of the original poem.

34. Continuing this line of thought, the actual content of the message itself is designed to soothe its addressee into sleep: to perform an effect on a subject rather than contemplate an object. The content of the message is an overdetermination of the soothing repetitions of the nurturing voice, the sinthomic

presence of embodied enjoyment that hovers around the poem.

Stars in my pocket—or is that a pocketful of slime?

35. "The Star" complicates the relationship between being and technology envisioned by writers such as Heidegger. The twinkling of the star is not just meaningless "noise" in the cybernetic sense: it is minimally significant. Nevertheless, its twinkling is not useful for the traveler. The star's role as a triangulating device or as a time-piece depends upon its inert objectal status. Its reduction to this is what gives the star its significance, what makes it tell the time. In this form, it *is* a cybernetic device: cybernetic in the precise sense that this word implies guidance, steerage (Greek: *kubernetes*, governor, helmsman). The universe is "to hand" (in Heidegger's sense) for the traveler; as convenient as a wristwatch. In one way, the entire poem is "handy" in this way, presenting a miniaturized universe. On the other hand, the poem opens the contemplating mind onto nonconceptual vastness. The star's wondrousness is logically prior to its instrumentality.

36. The Ancient Mariner's stars are already objectified as time-pieces: they are "handy" in Heidegger's terminology (Heidegger 69, 71-4).[12] It is only at the point of utter exhaustion that the Mariner gives up the notion of imposing conceptuality onto the real. This imposition has recently been read as falling within the territorializing logic of imperialism. David Simpson has argued that the empty, Antarctic vastness towards which the Mariner voyages is an aesthetic (Romantic) version of the imperialist conquest and objectification of the world (Simpson 155-7). In our time this objectification has reached the limit of life-forms themselves, as the genome is mapped, genes are patented, and rainforests are ransacked for biotechnology, in what the ecofeminist Vandana Shiva describes as a colonization of the "inside" of living organisms. Alan Bewell has recently argued that colonialism and imperialism in the Romantic period produced tremendous anxiety about, fascination for, and desire to dominate the earth's life-forms.

37. The Mariner's conceptuality is resonant in the sliminess of "a million million slimy things" (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), 4.230); a register picked up again in Sartre's disturbingly phobic *Being and Nothingness* (601-15).[13] The 1817 version's hyperbole is lessened to "a thousand thousand" (4.238). But both instances absorb the gaze into a teeming infinity and collectivity (Sartre: "a sly solidarity," 610). It is at this point, however, that the Mariner experiences some relief from the burden of his guilt: "Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, / They coiled and swam" (271-2; 1817, 279-80) as "The Moving moon went up the sky. / And no where did abide" (255-6; 1817, 263-4)—without such a strong connotation of telling the time. The snakes are still slimy, but they are not to be abjected (and subsequently objectified). Their sliminess is not only the revenge of objectivity ("the revenge of the In-itself," as Sartre puts it, 609), but also an invitation to look more carefully, to wonder. The "things" become "snakes."

38. I am sucked into a culinary reference here, especially as it pertains to Coleridge's Romantic opposition between poetic *hypsilatos* (sublimity, power) and *gluchotes* (sweetness), also caught up in his anti-slavery writing on sugar. Sartre declares that the revenge of the In-itself is threatening to the masculine subject: "the sugary death of the For-itself (like that of a wasp which sinks into the jam and drowns in it" (609). The sugariness of Taylor's poem is an indication of its objectal ambience—an immersive sliminess that threatens to drown the figure in the ground. The Mariner's temporary solution to the problem of his guilt and isolation is an immersion in the aesthetic experience of *gluchotes*: a sugary sentimentality whose gaze is down, as opposed to the sublime upward gaze of the masculine mountain-climber. This is an entirely unexpected solution given Coleridge's linkage, in the mid-1790s, of sugar with softness, artifice, luxury and cruelty (Morton, "Blood Sugar").

39. The problem of human beingness, declared Sartre and Lacan, is the problem of what to do with one's slime (one's shit): "The slimy is *myself*" (Sartre 609). Ultimately, is sliminess not the sacred, the taboo substance of life itself? The question of ecology, ultimately, is also bound up with what to do with pollution, miasma, slime of all kinds: with things that glisten, twinkle and decay. Should radioactive waste created by the nuclear bomb factory at Rocky Flats (about eight miles away from Boulder, Colorado) be swept under the Nevada carpet of an objectified world, a salt deposit that was declared in the 1950s to be safe, but in the 1990s has been found to leak (the Waste Isolation Pilot Project, or WIPP); how about the planned destination for spent fuel rods from reactors, Yucca Mountain in New Mexico? What does one do with the leakiness of the world? Deep green notions such as Nuclear Guardianship (as advocated by Joanna Macy and Kathleen Sullivan) suggest that poisonous things, like the plutonium whose "twinkling" release of poisoned light takes tens of thousand of years to cease, should be stored above ground in monitored retrievable storage; moreover, that a culture, indeed a spirituality, would have to grow up around the tending of this abjected substance. This is fitting: spirituality is not an escape from, but a taking care of, the abject. It should, incidentally, be clear that this view of "nature" is radically different both from the New Age and from the standard Cartesian dualism. While in these views, nature is a mysterious harmony or an automatic machine, in this essay's Zizekian view (a synthesis of Schelling and Lacan), nature is the existential life substance (Zizek, *Remainder* 218-20).

40. This all may seem rather far away from twinkling stars. But the semiotic implications of twinkling are entirely relevant to this discussion. What is disturbing about ambient signification is its minimalism: what is horrifying about slime is that it glistens as well as disrupting the boundary between figure and ground (that is the basis for the subject's self-positing in Sartre). We cannot self-posit; we are embedded in the slimy atmosphere in which stars twinkle. Twinkling and glistening ("being-glossy") are the visual equivalent of muttering or whispering without words. The twinkling star is the objective correlative of the lingual voice.

41. Taylor's star, like the Mariner's water snakes, is "in the real"; the narrator perceives it as such—which of course goes beyond concept ("How I wonder what you are"). It is so ontologically prior to its being a clock; and temporally prior to this in the singing of the nursery rhyme. And more significantly still it *returns* to being this, even with a vengeance ("Though I know not what you are"; stronger even than a choric repetition of the first verse). In this Taylor achieves one of the goals of the ambient artist: to reproduce, simulate or "render" the real (in Chion's terminology). Consider "found art": the *objet trouvé* points out the gaps between what Lacan calls the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The star is in the poem a hole in the symbolic that limns the Real: about as close to the Real as Lacan allows language to approach. As such it is a miniature version of the Wordsworthian "spot of time," the traumatic disruption forming the piece of grit that makes the pearl of the subject in the oyster of experience. From the point of view of the subject, this trauma is a hole, a tear in the symbolic tissue. But this absence masks a more bizarre kind of presence. The star is also a meaningless twinkling, the matheme for which would be (, the symbol for the phallus and for "woman": what "does not ex-sist" in patriarchal language (see Zizek, *Looking Awry* 135). It is a sinthome, a meaningless sprout of enjoyment, the inconsistent object around which ideology swirls-is it a timepiece? is it a compass? how is it "for" us? Taylor brilliantly returns the star to its sinthomic presence.

Placing "The Star"

42. When seen from outer space stars do not twinkle. One can verify this in an age more technologically "advanced" than the Romantic period. In that period , the only way to do this was from the utopian dimension of the Enlightenment—the impossible point of view of space itself, used to good effect in the opening notes to Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab*. By mentioning the speed of light and implying

theoretically vast size of the universe, Shelley establishes a radically nonanthropocentric point of view, in imitation of Milton.[14] This is the place to stand from which one might move the earth, as that poem's epigraph from Archimedes states. And still, in the space age, this impossible point of view is a feature of technotopian literature, such as Arthur C. Clarke's novelization of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, whose guiding trope is a constant othering of the point of view: "seen from this (new, unexpected or impossible) viewpoint, the subject appeared as such and such. . ."

43. The view, however, of stars from the surface of the earth is quite different, insofar as subtle irregularities in the density, humidity and temperature of the ambient atmosphere affect the way in which a beam of starlight travels through this medium. The irregularities refract the photons, making them dance back and forth. The technical term is "scintillation," connoting minimal signification, the minutest re-marking that makes a wink of a photon. A humid—or human—climate induces twinkling (stars in Antarctica, for instance, do not twinkle). The figure of twinkling is thus evidence of ambience, a paradoxical "ground" for this figure, as the atmosphere is *in front of* the star.

44. Atmosphere is itself a consequence of the massiness of the earth; in other words, its gravity. Isaac Newton had made of space a vacuum, and turned matter into objectified solidity, and rendered space and time abstract and separate containers of the universe. Before Einstein, who asserted the radical inextricability of spacetime from the universe itself; and quantum physicists, who showed that there is no such thing as perfectly empty space; Romantic poets, with their figuration of atmosphere, and Romantic philosophers, with their interest in phenomenology, asserted the radical in-ness of reality. This is ultimately a line of thought that leads to Lacan's notion that there is no metalanguage; and Derrida's statement, "Il n'y a pas d'hors texte" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 158).

Glitter, glitter, empty city: Wordsworth and "negative ecology"

45. The "diamond"-like twinkling of the star in Taylor's poem, however, is a feature not only of physical space but also of ideology. Benjamin observes a very similar twinkling in the phantasmagoric space of the Paris arcades, an "ambiguity of *space*" created by their "abundance of mirrors": "the whispering of gazes fills the arcades" (Benjamin 877-8). With this in mind, we might helpfully compare "The Star" with Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge." Wordsworth's time and place markers ("Sept. 2, 1802") are ambient tropes employed later by writers such as Gary Snyder ("Bomb Test"), influenced also by the walking Zen poetry of Basho. They also call to mind the environmental art of contemporary figures such as Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy (whose work now inhabits the Lake District, Lancashire and Southern Scotland). Could we make a case for Wordsworth as an ambient poet, even though for Keats he was the poet of ego *par excellence*?

46. We have seen in a previous section how Wordsworth attempts to flee the realm of commodified objects, only to find himself, like Alice approaching the Looking-Glass House, back where he started. Is this, however, entirely unfruitful? The sonnet on "getting and spending" is in the sequence that includes a highly original contemplation of city life, "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge," one of Wordsworth's strongest examples of ambience. Wordsworth's empty city already has the ambience of transitional spaces such as the airport, the hotel or the bay, spaces for which Brian Eno conceived ambient music. This music's power to disturb such spaces rather than tranquilize them should be noted: when Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* began to be used in Chicago O'Hare's United Tunnel, it was soon withdrawn because of passengers' complaints of heightened anxiety. Wordsworth's sonnet is equally disturbing, and tranquil.

47. The experience of the empty city is, as Raymond Williams noted, an entirely fresh "structure of feeling," (Williams 151-2, 233-4) and ambient music arose out of this structure: consider the techno

music that emerged in the deracinated industrialism of Detroit, or the drum and bass that developed in the emptied spaces of South-East London, spaces inhabited by the black working class. The minimalist aesthetic of Wordsworth's poem resembles strikingly pieces of music such as Goldie's "Inner City Life" (or the significantly named "Still Life") or the quiet speed of Derrick May and LTJ Bukem, poised hauntingly between an enjoyment of deracination and a critique of it. Hartman has noted the minimalism of *Lyrical Ballads*, yet specifically pits this *against* industrialism (Hartman 207). But the picture is more complex than that.

48. Williams observes that Wordsworth's city is that of (republican) civilization, in excess of industry: "before the noise of the working day, and also before the smoke of its later development" (Williams 152). It is the role of what Williams calls "before" that is so subtle. Here is the poem:

> Earth has not any thing to shew more fair,
> Dull would he be of soul who could not pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty;
> This City now doth like a garment wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill;
> Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
> The river glideth at his own sweet will:
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
> And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The literally breathtaking enactment of "lie / open" (6-7), where the poem opens to the space of the page itself (a device with which Mallarmé is usually credited for having discovered), is a brilliantly minimal presentation of the sinthomic voice, an open mouth without content. This was noted even by the Wordsworth-phobic F.R. Leavis (Leavis 118). Thus the body emerges in Wordsworth's disembodied poem. Though it is legible in the negative (it is not "in" the words or "on" the page), this is a remarkable phenomenon.

49. The paratactic list, "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples" (6), alludes to Milton's Hell, "Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death" (*Paradise Lost*, 2.620).[15] One is tempted to declare that while Milton presents the "rotten world" of slimy, natural death (Lévi-Strauss 1, 142-3, 151-2, 169-70), Wordsworth offers the "burnt world" of supernatural death. But the "lying open" of these liminal spaces to the natural world of "fields" and "sky" (7), and the ghostly presence of the sinthomic voice in the blank space of the page, that has become part of the sonnet, reveals far more of the existential substance of *life*. This life-in-death is the flip side of what Freud's thinking on Eros ("builder of cities") reveals, in his insight that life yearns towards, in James Strachey's poetic translation, "the quiescence of the inorganic word" (Freud, *Beyond* 86; Hartman 191).[16] This very suggestive phrase is more than what Freud might be suggesting, however: "quiescence" implies something still living, where "inertia" would have brought it to a dead stop; one is reminded of Keats's "quiet breathing" ("A thing of beauty is a joy forever. . ." *Endymion* 1.5). "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," then, is disturbingly erotic in a similar way: it conveys half-life, undeath, life's infinitesimal degree.

50. It is not even as simple (as straightforwardly complicated) as that, however. The *double entendre* of "lie / Open" conveys an open secret, an exclusion that has been included—an encryption. What we are seeing is the ghostly substantiality of capital itself, as the potential energy of the city lies dormant in the

early morning hours. The capitol becomes capital. The secret of this form is itself, lying open in all the vast emptinesses of modern living. What we have here is *negative ecology*, like negative theology (see Zizek, *Sublime Object* 11-16; Bull 144-5).[17] Production has ceased, but value is omnipresent. This is clarified in the istic glistening of the buildings, "All bright and glittering in the smokeless air" (8). "Bright and glittering" has an effect similar to "Twinkle, twinkle": we are being made aware of an atmosphere, howsoever minimal and refined ("smokeless"). Figure—the vertical masts and towers—is flattened into ground—fields and sky—through the word "lie." In Taylor, the star's appearance at the window takes it out of the vertical realm.[18] Paratactic lists, the sinthomic voice, the liminal presence of atmosphere, horizontality: are we not in the realm of a Romanticism defined as feminine by such writers as Jeffrey Robinson and Jerome McGann (Robinson 66-74)?[19] And is this not a striking conclusion to draw concerning Wordsworth?

51. It is capital, then, that charges modern space with ambience, creating a force field of which nature (the Lake District that Wordsworth offers as a retreat from modernity) is actually an analogue rather than a counter-image. The narrator of the sonnet becomes a minimalist version of what was later called the *flâneur*, analyzed in Benjamin's reading of Paris, wandering amidst metastasized capital—but the businesses are not even open yet (for an allusion to Wordsworth on the city in Benjamin's writing on Baudelaire, see Benjamin 231, 968; see Morton, *Spice* 235).[20]

52. "The Star," with its portable indigenousness, is a product of the very same historical moment. Furthermore, its ambience is as double-edged as Wordsworth's: revealing a *belonging* that is also a *longing*. If "culture" is designed "*convert longing into belonging*" (Hartman 180), to make space into place, then its products are paradoxical; for they unwind place into space again, belonging into longing. The tables in Redfish, a Boulder restaurant, create ambience: they are so huge that one cannot hold hands across them. Symbols of the proprietor's wealth (and metonymically the diner's), they are also symbols of division and longing. Wordsworth's De Chirico urban emptiness, and Taylor's empty intimate sky, cast the same spell, bestowing the feel of alien nation.

House music: the poetics and politics of wondering

53. We may conceive of "The Star" as oscillating between *speculation* and *wondering*; or to put it in more loaded ideological terms, between French *civilisation* and German *Kultur*; surely the Romance and Germanic origins of the two words I have chosen are not accidental (Hartman 211, Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* 9). Speculation assumes the ability to jump to the impossible view of the other. Wondering implies radical location in space and time. Speculation may be noted in the view of the sun "When he nothing shines upon" (6); and the focalization through the mind of "the traveller in the dark" (9), and his use of the star to triangulate his position, which implies being able to jump to the view of the other. This is why Rousseau wants to educate Emile by having him get lost in a forest where he will be forced to triangulate to find his way home; a Spartan version of Enlightenment education. Wondering is legible, however, in the gap between knowing and experiencing: "Though I know not what you are, / Twinkle, twinkle, little star" (19-20).

54. "When he nothing shines upon" is also a slippage between nothing at all, and some (minimally substantial) nothingness; and this second category could either mean "the absence of something" or "the presence of nothing." On the one hand, the line evokes the empiricist/skepticist problem of the tree falling in the forest without an observer. This implies that there cannot be a "world out there," if by that phrase one meant a truly existing (independent, single and lasting) realm of objects. On the other hand, the figure implies that the sun is still shining despite its unseenness. This evokes another kind of ambience, the sort suggested by Lacan in his writing on the symbolic order when he describes the

signified as a "presence made of absence" ("une présence faite d' absence," Lacan, "Fonction," 276). The ultimate ghostly presence, in patriarchy, is the phallus. In that case, the reader might wonder whether the star is a feminine counterpart to this absent phallic sun; a dangerous supplement that fatally complicates the whole notion of a tight opposition between presence and absence, subject and object.

55. "How I wonder" (2) is an exclamation, a self-reflexive remark that draws attention to wondering in itself. Wondering what "you" are posits "me." I cannot introduce Martin Buber's notion of I-thou relationships at this point, as this assumes a metaphysical priority of "thou" in relation to "I." One might more helpfully read "How I wonder" as a minimalist figuration of Romantic subjectivity. One could not assume, however, that this is a form of solipsism: that would be to assert the ontological priority of "I"; and evidently the poem deals not with blank otherness, but with "you." Moreover, the imagined presence of the traveler complicates any sense of "I-it" or "I-thou." Some might object that little children do not want to do philosophy: what is the point, anyway, of squeezing all of these implications out of a nursery rhyme? But to assume that children are not interested in philosophy is to reproduce the anti-intellectual and primitivist Romantic view of childhood.

56. Heidegger's view of wondering is the reproduction of the attitude of a stupefied peasant (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 64), the anti-intellectual enjoyment of place that Nazism installed at the very heart of a murderous rationalism. But in rejecting m, we should not reject introversion as if it could be identified entirely with Heideggerian thought. For it is this introverted contemplation that was precisely what the Nazis condemned "as being an offence against community feeling," as Freud condemned it as "an autoerotic, 'narcissistic' attitude" (Jung 487). This quiet wondering is what Geoffrey Hartman celebrates in the poetry of Wordsworth. Giving the poet too much political power, Hartman cites Wordsworth as the reason England did not have a strong t moment. But to his credit, Hartman's praise of wondering is a significant counterblast to the instrumental reason that dominates bureaucratized intellectuality in the modern academy. Hartman writes:

> we [academic intellectuals] are too defensive about the contemplative life. Its *otium* is not otiose. We should recognize more firmly its achievements and its relation to a certain spaciousness, especially that of a shrinking rural world. Not to heed Wordsworth's understanding of the ecology of mind jeopardizes the bond between nature and mind. The spacious ambience of nature when treated with respect, allows physical and emotional freedom; it is an outdoor room essential to thought and untraumatic (that is, relatively unforced) development.

57. For Hartman, as objective space collapses, subjective "spaciousness" remains potent. I wonder about the validity of Hartman's use of "room" as safe haven, sanctuary. It would be perilous to obtain a metaphysical distinction between inside and outside from the paradoxical image of an "outdoor room." This notion of the room is too poverty-stricken, attached to an idea of private property (however rooted in a natural outside) that Hartman sees as essential to liberty (Hartman 76-7). This is a basic tenet of republicanism, whose image of liberty is the garden (reduced in modern America to the lawn), as in Andrew Marvell's garden at Nun Appleton. And could not the idea of the outside as room serve to reproduce, howsoever subtly, the Nazi notion of *Lebensraum*? Even if not, one cannot help thinking of the paucity of the "lounge" or "living room" as a model for a contemplative space—one of the central inadequacies of Brian Eno's view of the role of ambience. Surely common land, or a street corner, in our time a locus of racist arrests (and of Miles Davis's *On the Corner*, a strongly ambient work)—or Westminster Bridge—are more potent spaces?

58. Moreover, surely the paradox of inside as outside—a form of Möbius strip—is as traumatic as it is soothing? One function of ambience is to permeate and trouble the inside with the outside. Wordsworth's poems and ambient music (laced with atmospheric samples) are often consumed indoors;

it is the opposite of the cozy externality of Auden's "Out on the lawn I lie in bed" (1). It is no surprise that Auden's poem is more blatantly republican than Wordsworth's Westminster Bridge sonnet or "The Star," with its imagery of homoerotic brotherly bonding:

> Equal with colleagues in a ring
> I sit on each calm evening,
> Enchanted as the flowers. (13-15)

Auden also employs a striking ecotopian allusion to Isaiah 11, the passage about the lion lying down with the lamb (22-24), in a blend of Judaeo-Christian and republican idyll reminiscent of Shelley (Morton, *Shelley* chapter 3). This is another version of emotion recollected in tranquillity (Wordsworth, *Wordsworth* 598). Ambience may therapeutically displace the spontaneous overflow; but it is also what recollects it. If it were too safe and soothing, surely some forms of ambient music, music for bourgeois lounges that is ("high" versions of Muzak), could remind one of what Adorno said of the Nazis' use of Beethoven at Auschwitz to drown the screams (Adorno 365). Tranquillity must recollect the real, then, as all avant garde art from Wordsworth to Rauschenberg tries to incorporate the real. Or as a lullaby, designed to soothe, also opens the child to the lingual and sidereal real.

59. Hartman continues: "To curtail [contemplation] adds to the damage done to the culture of civil society by the totalizing and controlling demands of political religions" (Hartman 158). I suggest instead that the real problem is aggressive conceptual mind; including the mind that condemns politics because of a certain concept of nature. This aggressive mind also includes *contemplative idealism* of a certain kind, the kind that asserts ego in its highest form as the nation-state. This kind of contemplation is to be distinguished from the more open, and more quiet, and more troubling introverted contemplation that Hartman describes. Might there be a way of inhabiting a place that did not entail murder and destruction? It might be wise to find one, lest the White Man's Burden is all the most powerful on this earth have either to accept or reject. And it might be wise not to do this in a New Age invasion of "Eastern" philosophy. In fact, it would be good to discover it in the very cultures from which the toxic thought has emerged that the world is objectified stuff, and that the subject is absolutely free abstraction (see Jung 490-1).

60. Hartman's "outdoor room" is precariously poised between the republican idea of freedom in ownership of land—that seems so sober, so calm—and the fantasy of the *indoor garden* visited by Aladdin in the *Arabian Nights*. Wordsworth himself was keen to naturalize this tale in *The Prelude* 5 (Richardson 122-24). A door that opens into a further inside that is also an outside—this is none other than the *mise-en-abîme* of the literary text, against which Wordsworth tries to struggle, manfully: "Up! up!. . and quit your books" ("The Tables Turned," 3). Coleridge's dream of the Arab in *The Prelude* 5 is Wordsworth's own complication of inside and outside, as the apocalyptic "fleet waters" provide an ambient music that wakes the dreamer up to the reality of the encroaching waves (5.136).

61. In the tale of Aladdin, instead of the text of nature, we have the text as nature (as fantastic garden of jewels). Likewise Taylor's "like a diamond" makes of nature a fantastic luxury item, handy as jeweled fruit in an interior garden. It recurs in James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "The heaventree of stars, hung with humid nightblue fruit" (Joyce 573). The fantasy of the "outdoor room," by contrast, attempts to avoid the luxurious squandering evoked in Aladdin's jewel garden. It is something of a republican image—only this is a paradoxical republic of introversion, with no people around. Hartman, in his attempt to address the issue of Wordsworthian ecology, and his reluctance to fall back on images that would evoke *Kultur*, has to plump for something that is not fully open to its secret: the secret of femininity (auto , luxury, writing, expenditure).

62. The outdoor room appears to be the antinomy of the "garden room" in the *Arabian Nights*, insofar as

the former is natural, while the latter is a figure of artifice and luxury (and fitted into the eighteenth century English discourse of luxury). In *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real*, David Simpson has shown the extent to which Wordsworth wished to guard against luxury in his figuring of a fragile republic in the Lake District. The asymmetry between republicanism and luxury, two of the great discouses of the long eighteenth century, is poignant: they are implicated in one another, but also exclude one another. This has, moreover, proved a real stumbling block for a progressive ecology that does not fall back upon royalist motifs of natural hierarchy and benevolent stewardship; one recalls here Simpson's arguments about the authoritarianism of the category of the "natural" (xvii). If we examine Wordsworth closely, however, we find that luxury and republicanism are harder to keep apart than he might consciously have wished. But really, these images resemble each other intricately in Wordsworth's own writing. If, in *The Prelude* 5, the *Arabian Nights* are like *The Prelude* (the oral transmission of an organic lineage, 520-1), then the reverse holds true: *The Prelude* must resemble the *Arabian Nights*. The rather empty outside of the "outdoor room" is nothing but a masculinized version of the feminized luxury garden, the interior of jewel trees and autoerotic lamps.

63. On the one hand, Hartman, like Wordsworth most of the time, is warding off femininity. On the other, surely what Hartman is also trying to ward off is Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, the philosophical basis for a dangerously localist politics of *Volk*. But if being out in nature is also being in a room of jewels, then the difference between artifice and nature on which the localism of *Dasein* is predicated is deconstructed. There is, in the unfortunate phrasing of the Vietnam War, "no there there." *Dasein* is a heffalump, a phallic ghost, presence made of absence, or rather from the graphic traces of that absence in the world. Winnie the Pooh and his frightened friend Piglet circle a tree in the Hundred-Acre Wood they call home (an accidentally Heideggerian location). The footprints of absence, formed by the subject's anxious self-circling (literally "wondering what you are"), ignore the substance around which the circles are made, the very world-stuff of which *Dasein* is only the ized reflection. This world-stuff is between two things. If one wants to be an essentialist, it is the scintillating horror/bliss of existential angst, that which the late Merleau-Ponty calls the flesh, inseparable from the world of perception. But it is also the trace of writing as it were in an analog medium, the medium of the world itself, which is also a palimpsest of traces. It is a longing for presence rather than a belonging to presence: *différance*.[21]

64. *Dasein* is a peculiarly anthropocentric and anxious form of being: it is specifically human being (as opposed to star being, or cloud being). One of Heidegger's figures for it is of a telephone call from an anxious mother to an absent but anxious child—a child somewhat older than the audience for "The Star" (Ronell 27-8).[22] Heidegger's view of technology, then, is of an external prosthesis, a dangerous supplement of authentic beingness. But what if technology were exemplified by a lullaby? In Taylor's poem, the star exceeds human being just as it is caught in it; it is a timepiece and a stile for the traveler; but it is also a wondrous phenomenon, something that opens the mind towards it in itself. What is striking about "The Star" is not so much is evocation of being-thereness, as its portability: this is a lullaby that creates, enacts, conjures being-there no matter where it is sung. It is a refrain that creates territory (Deleuze and Guattari 310-50). But it is also a song that opens territory, relaxes being-thereness, out into space. Being here is as portable as a song, which is more than can be said for a national anthem. "The Star" thus broaches a non-essentialist form of indigenousness. In Jakobson's outline of the six-part model of communication, talking birds are said to share just one of the model's functions: the phatic (foregrounding the contact; Jakobson 356). We are back at the exploration of minimalist language—the "speech" of Charlie Brown's friend Woodstock the bird. The phatic is then the point at which language opens human being to the natural world (which, for shamanic cultures, is simply a larger assemblage of "people"). Future ecocritical work will thus have to take the phatic dimension of language into account.[23]

65. "The Star" proposes—more, it enacts—the fact that human beings are radically "in" time and space—indeed, unreified spacetime—in the same sense as one might be "in" love. The grown-up word for this inhabiting is undoubtedly history. But if history becomes destiny, it is segregated from spatiality and forced to wander with the White Man's Burden. And if spatiality becomes culture in its most reified sense, the Nazi sense of Kultur, then time is effaced and apocalyptic genocide beckons. It would be ridiculous, and ridiculously hard, to make of "The Star" a fantasy kernel for t or imperial ideology. Its presentation of glittering spacetime exceeds the ideological frames in which it could be captured. In the future it will be less dangerous to think a deep-ecological poetics through this kind of feminine Romantic writing than it has been to think it through Heidegger, whose fatal mistake was to reify environment, that which could not (even on his own terms) be so solidified. Dangerously necessary, for otherwise ecology is hamstrung by the notions of subject and object in the name of which the earth is being destroyed.

66. In *The Fateful Question of Culture*, Hartman warns against what Wallace Stevens called a "cure of the ground"—a "back to nature" or "back to basics" approach that we often associate with ecological poetics and politics (Hartman 27). In concluding this essay, let us consider how ecology and ecopoetics may be articulated. What is most subversive about both "The Star" and Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" is not their return to a ground, to nature: not what one might traditionally understand as the anti-supplemental characteristics of Romantic poetry. *What is subversive is their presentation of surplus enjoyment*, that confuses the difference between figure and ground, and opens the possibility of ecological awareness. In Taylor, this is the surplus of the sinthomic voice. In Wordsworth, it is the surplus of a surplus: the secret enjoyment of secret surplus value (capital). In addition, by *reversing belonging into longing*, fulfillment into unfulfillment, these poems counteract the territorial aggression that turns space into place. As I demonstrate in the final chapter of *The Poetics of Spice*, the orientation of poetry in the Romantic period *towards* rather than away from surplus has a potentially liberating ecological effect. In order to celebrate nature without risking turning it into private property (the outdoor room) or to *Dasein*, ecocriticism must embrace the culturally feminine aspects of space in all their meaningless surplus inconsistency. In Coleridge's terms, this would be jump into the subject—dissolving stickiness of aesthetic *glutchotes*. Perhaps "The Star" will become the nonnational nonanthem of this kind of ecological awareness.

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Links

http://www.hyperreal.org/

A good example of one of the very many sites on ambient music.

Notes

1 See William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible*.

2 One of the most suggestive formulations is Elizabeth Fay's: "If William's picturesque belongs to the valley and bower, the sacred grove is where he situates the meeting of the picturesque and the beautiful with the sublime, a meeting that transmutes the feminine into the transcendent and brings the masculine sublimity of mountains home to pasture" (184).

3 For a discussion of the significance of Sappho in the Romantic period, see McGann 94-116.

4 "You may also find it interesting that Shinichi Suzuki advocates Mozart's Variations on 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' as the first piece a child should learn in the Suzuki Method of musical training, which he theorizes as a form of language acquisition" (*Nota bene* from Melissa Sites, text editor of 'Romanticism and Ecology,' to the author).

5 In general, the seventh chapter of *Looking Awry* is a sustained analysis of the rhetoric and politics of the sinthome. The term is a pun on the St. Thomas, who had to insert his fingers into the gaping wound in the side of the risen Christ, who had returned to convince Thomas of His reality. For Lacan, the sinthome is neither symptom nor fantasy but "the point marking the dimension of 'what is in the subject more than himself' and what he therefore 'loves more than himself'" (Zizek, *Looking Awry* 132)

6 This would square well with the vaginal connotations of the *sinthome*, in patriarchy a *wound* that is also a *space*. See Zizek's discussion of Ridley Scott's film *Alien* (*Sublime Object* 79). It also squares with Lacan's view of subjecthood as a hole in the real caused by the removal of a "little bit" of it, that nevertheless results in the *framing* of reality (see Jacques-Alain Miller's explanation in Zizek, *Looking Awry* 94-5).

7 I am grateful to Jeremy Braddock for discussing this with me.

8 The allusion is to Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, 281-83, 245-48—"pleasant lea"; "Triton blowing loud his wreathed borne"; "coming from the sea" alludes to *Paradise Lost* iii.603-604, "call up unbound / In various shapes old *Proteus* from the sea" (Wordsworth, *Poems* 411).

9 "Le fond de cette gorge, à la forme complexe, insituable, qui en fait aussi bien l' objet primitif par excellence, l' abîme de l' organe féminin" ("Rêve," 196).

10 In particular, consider the following: "Insofar as it is not anchored to a specific source, localized in a specific place, the *voix acousmatique* functions as a threat that lurks everywhere . . . its free-floating presence is the all-pervasive presence of a *nonsubjectivized object*, i.e., of a voice-object without support in a subject serving as its source. It is in this way that *déacousmatisation* [the linkage of an acousmatic voice with a subject] equals *subjectivization*" (Zizek, *Looking Awry* 127).

11 I have omitted the prose between lines 2 and 3.

12 Heidegger's term is *Zuhandenheit*.

13 Sartre's view of woman/sex as a "hole" (613-4) is relevant to the earlier discussion of space as invaginated *sinthome* (see note 5). For parallels between Romantic and existential disgust, see Denise Gigante, "After Taste: The Aesthetics of Romantic Eating."

14 See for example *Paradise Lost*, 3.588-90 (where Satan is reduced to a figure seen through a telescope), 8.153-8 (where humans are viewed as not the only inhabitants of the cosmos).

15 This is something of an evocation of the *hellish* ambience of the city, as noted in Benjamin's study of nineteenth-century representations of Paris (10). Benjamin was fond of Percy Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third* in this regard (370, 449-50).

16 In Hartman's haunting phrase, "we call peace what is really desolation" (191). See Freud 30-1, 47, 67, 76 (on the "Nirvana" principle).

17 For Marx, "classical political economy is interested only in contents concealed behind the commodity-form, which is why it cannot explain the true secret, not the secret behind the form but the *secret of this form itself*" (Zizek, *Sublime Object* 15). Malcolm Bull's very suggestive subversion of Nietzsche offers a view of "totalized" society that contains all those species that Nietzsche would categorize as "subhuman." Wordsworthian negative ecology would not, for Bull, be negative enough: it is far from philistine and thus subject to Nietzsche's nihilistic valuation of value itself.

18 Rosalind Krauss has recently argued that this kind of "horizontality" is a feature of abstract expressionist visual art (Bois and Krauss 93-103). Evidently Wordsworth was very interested in such effects in the literature of an earlier moment of the avant-garde; compare the way in which the narrator in "Tintern Abbey" wishes to connect the landscape with "the quiet of the sky" (8) in a view that first, unlike the picturesque is radically "inside" its own frame, and secondly undoes the difference between horizontal and vertical that Krauss names as establishing a difference between human and animal, and is caught up in the commodity ism of paintings themselves (hung vertically in galleries).

19 Robinson declares of the lines "This City now doth like a garment wear / The beauty of the morning": "Essentially Thomsonian, the line (and poem) personifies the city in order to allow variety to be absorbed by the beautifying feminizing unifying perspective of the composed and composing meditation" (100).

20 Convolute J on Baudelaire (231): "From the eighth section of Baudelaire's 'Salon de 1859.' There one finds, apropos of Meryon, this phrase: 'the profound and complex charm of a capital city which has grown old and worn in the glories and tribulations of life.' A little further on: 'I have rarely seen the natural solemnity of an immense city more poetically reproduced. Those majestic accumulations of stone; those spires "whose fingers point to heaven"; those obelisks of industry, spewing forth their conglomerations of smoke against the firmament; those prodigies of scaffolding 'round buildings under repair, applying their openwork architecture, so paradoxically beautiful, upon architecture's solid body; that tumultuous sky, charged with anger and spite; those limitless perspectives, only increased by the thought of all the drama they contain;—he forgot not one of the complex elements which go to make up the painful and glorious décor of civilization . . . . But a cruel demon has touched M. Meryon's brain . . . . And from that moment we have never ceased waiting anxiously for some consoling news of this singular naval officer who in one short day turned into a mighty artist, and who bade farewell to the ocean's solemn adventures in order to paint the gloomy majesty of this most disquieting of capitals.' Cited in Gustave Geoffroy, *Charles Meryon* (Paris, 1926), pp. 125-126. Note 10 : 'The phrase "those spires 'whose fingers point to heaven'" (*montrant du doigt le ciel*), translates a line from

Wordsworth's poem 'The Excursion' (book 6, line 19), itself a citation from Coleridge." Surely the antecedent of this figure is "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" (968), but it is more radical than the vertical fingers, indicating not a world of life-forms but a transcendental, theistic realm.

21 In the second chapter of *The Fateful Question of Culture*, Hartman very eloquently establishes what for him is the necessarily phantom nature of this longing—its embodiment, for Hartman, would precipitate disaster. But to make this phantom transcendent would in a sense be to *locate* it. This is quite the opposite of what we are trying to establish: the figuration of "here" without location.

22 Readers intrigued by Ronell's linkage of technology and schizophrenia in the figure of distant speech (in this essay, acousmatic speech), may be interested to know that researchers at the University of Colorado have recently discovered a receptor in the hypothalamus (in the brain) that is sensitive to the difference between foreground and background noise. When this receptor malfunctions, people are unable to distinguish between foreground (meaningful) sound (for example, speech) and ambient sound; hence the schizophrenic phenomenon of hearing voices in radiators, car engines, animals. . .

23 When exploring the radically *new* environment of the space and moon, the first words between the American astronauts and Houston were phatic: "You can go ahead with the TV now, we're standing by . . . ." This explains the popularity in contemporary ambient electronic music of samples from radio talk shows ("Hello, you're on the air"), scanned telephone conversations and other phatic phenomena.