

in the accounts of Sir Dudley Carleton, John Houghton and a few anonymous pamphlets. The image of the all-powerful state with a fictitious power of sovereignty created by Hobbes is, Mr. Nishiyama maintains, demolished by Swift's rhetorical power of disintegrating what is accepted as whole and absolute.

This is a major study of Swift as intellectual and rhetorician. It is the kind of book that opens questions rather than gives reassurances. And it is a book worth reading by anyone interested in Swift and the economic culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries simply for its scope.

Onno Dag Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature*.

University of Toronto Press, 2002, vii + 253 pp.

Reviewed by Keiichiro Uetsuki, Nihon University

Introduction

After having earned his Ph.D. from Yale University, Onno Oerlemans is now an associate professor of English of Hamilton College. He has published articles such as "Whitman and the Erotics of Lyric," "The Dynamics of Lyric and Narrative in the Poetry of Wordsworth and Whitman," and "The Will to Knowledge and the Process of Narrative in *Paradise Lost*." He also has published earlier versions of a few chapters of *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* on representations of animals, Shelley's vegetarianism and taxonomy in romanticism, which examine how romantic-period authors represent the physical presence of the natural world.

Due to current interest in environmentalism, literary critics have naturally reconsidered the romantic poets with ecological viewpoints. For example, such critics as Jonathan Bate, Lawrence Buell, Alan Bewell, and Karl Kroeber have demonstrated explicit connections between romanticism and contemporary versions of the environmental imagination. Their works can be at least partially regarded "as an attempt to rescue romanticism from charges of political and moral apostasy made by new historicist critics in the 1980s." (Oerlemans, 3. After this, the number means the page of the book) This timely study extends the current eco-critical views by synthesizing a range of viewpoints from the Romantic period. He explores not only the ideas of poets and artists, but also those of philosophers, scientists and explorers. He grounds his discussion in the works of specific romantic writers, especially Wordsworth and Shelley, but also draws liberally on such fields as recent literary criticism, the philosophy of science, travel literature, environmental policy, art history, biology, geology, and genetics. By juxtaposing vegetarianism and revolutionary ideas, the painting of George Stubbs and the

animal poetry of John Clare, the material particularity of Wordsworth and the taxonomic theories of Cuvier and Darwin, he creates a fertile work through historical analysis, a cultural studies approach and close reading. Through his analyses, we discover that the Romantics understood how they perceived the physical world, and how they distorted and abused it. Oerlemans' wide-ranging study adds much to our understanding of Romantic-period thinkers and their relationship to the natural world.

At first he aims to suggest the crucial ways in which nature as material essence was a focus of romantic attention. In this sense, he is not so different from many critics who have researched 'nature' in romanticism, but he is original in showing "the ability of individual writers of the period to think through, to defamiliarize and deconstruct, the established cultural, linguistic, and personal categories of the natural world." (98) We are already familiar with the power of language and consciousness over the material in the romantic poetry in such expressions as Coleridge's 'one Life,' Wordsworth's 'motion and spirit,' Shelley's 'unseen power,' and Keats's 'viewless wings of Poesy.' Oerlemans' aim is to defamiliarize such modes of romanticism, to see in its wide range of authors and texts the moments when the material is not transcended, but confronted, and when representation perhaps paradoxically defers to the physical reality that the writers yearn to represent. He predicts "this will be a 'green' mode of reading." (13)

By asserting that an environmental sensibility has a debt in Romanticism, Oerlemans examines the true ecological awareness of romantic writers. The book moves through analysis of Wordsworth's poetry and the material sublime in the first chapter, to the second chapter on romantic representations of animals. In the third chapter, Shelley's commitment to vegetarianism is regarded as evidence of his own view of man in nature, and the scientific taxonomy and organizational systems as they apply to the natural world are discussed intensely in the fourth chapter. Finally Oerlemans considers travel writing as a source for contemporary notions of nature.

Three book reviews of *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* that contributed to a more accurate understanding of this work should be mentioned: anonymous' in *The Guardian*, Saturday June 22, 2002; James C. McKusick's in *Wordsworth Circle*, September 22, 2003; Robert M. Ryan's in *Keats-Shelley Journal*, LII, 2003, 231-33. According to Hamilton College HP, we can look forward to future publications from Oerlemans on the conflict between city and country in the 19th century, particularly of the perceived effects of such landscapes on consciousness.

I

Wordsworth is often said to have made nature conceptual, to have depicted it as more modified and abstract than concrete, or to have sought to transcend the

material world in his poetry. It is his consciousness that changes nature and finds a consciousness in nature, or it can be said that his consciousness may easily transcend nature. This attitude of his has been the usual focus of both praise and criticism by his critics. In other words, the nature that has been presented in his poetry is still too theoretical, too generalized, and too anthropocentric. Considering the priority between the consciousness and the material world, 'consciousness' has been primary in his criticism. The priority of consciousness is derived from the theocentric view that spirit exists first, matter second; that is, matter is derived from spirit. This idea is similar to that of the patriarchal viewpoint as defined by feminist critics. But Oerlemans subverts such an idea by insisting that human consciousness is not primary and the material realm may not yield itself to consciousness. One of the author's original contributions is in pointing out that it has not been sufficiently recognized that Wordsworth directly confronts the physical materiality or otherness of nature in a profound and original way.

His next step is to show that Wordsworth's meditations on the material sublime are not incidental, but are a crucial component of much of his most important poetry. The first chapter focuses on these meditative moments in his poetry when an examination of the material sublime is most easily noticed. Citing Wordsworth's letter on the 'Intimations Ode' and some other poems as examples of the poet confronting the materiality of nature, Oerlemans examines such moments as reflect the poet's ability to confront this. He clearly shows us that the moments are frequently elegiac, in which the poet sees in meditating on death the overwhelming presence of the physical, because "imagining and comprehending death for Wordsworth begin by comprehending that matter is primary." (39) Elegiac moments in Wordsworth's poetry frequently involve direct confrontations with matter. The author recognizes that it is here that Wordsworth is most original.

Oerlemans also examines Wordsworth's personal long epic, *The Prelude*. Though for the most part not explicitly elegiac, many of the crucial episodes of *The Prelude* reveal an awareness of how consciousness springs from the material realm and remains fundamentally different from nature. The poem on the growth of his consciousness questions how it arises abstractly and concretely from its physical environment. He points out that the question occurs in several of the poem's more lyric passages, including the well-known episodes about the Boy of Winander, crossing Simplon Pass, the spots of time, and the boat stealing.

Oerlemans' final example in the first chapter is from *The Ruined Cottage*. The poem reveals that nature need not be a fertile ground for human beings, and simply that it is the only ground completely indifferent to them, which easily leads to the recent eco-critical viewpoint of deconstructing anthropocentrism. Finally the poem "undermines elegiac conventions by refusing the completion of narrative, and by confronting the most brutal facts of absence in the physicality of

remains.” (64)

II

Though animals appear in art and literature of all periods, even a casual survey of the romantic art and literature clearly reveals that attention to animals increased during the period. In the second chapter, by mainly examining the poetry of Wordsworth, Clare, and Coleridge as well as a painting by George Stubbs, Oerlemans examines representations of animals in the period to show how they provide a means through which writers could meditate on connections to, and/or differences from, the natural world. Oerlemans explores the ways in which romantic period writing (and painting) pays particular attention to the non-human in nature, and how otherness itself is seen as variegated. Animal consciousness is a specific kind of otherness, worthy of attention in its own right, and at the same time a potential bridge to the deeper otherness of nature. So the romantic representations of animals induce us to explore how they force readers to confront the problems raised by the issue of anthropomorphism as well as ideologies inherent in certain acts of representations.

In an older orthodox belief, animals could not feel fear or even pain, and hunting was purely an act of exercising a right given by God to harvest nature's diverse bounty. For example, George Stubbs' *Freeman, the Earl of Clarendon's Gamekeeper, with a Dying Doe and a Hound* (see frontispiece of the book) shows those who commissioned the painting that the dying doe represents the country gentleman's control over nature. Since the painting creates sympathy for the dying deer, it allows us “to anthropomorphize the suffering of the deer, and at the same time to question the nature of that anthropomorphizing.” (71) Oerlemans does not forget to point out that Stubbs's other paintings represent animals as having energy and presence not absolutely possessed or even understood by the humans around them. This paradoxical understanding is actually achieved by giving the animals expression and painting them as possessing emotion that is undetermined whether they have or not, which we might recognize as a form of anthropomorphizing.

Even though the work of Stubbs raises the issue of anthropomorphizing without answering it, romantic poetry makes a serious attempt to confront the issue directly. Poets such as John Clare, Robert Burns, Coleridge and Wordsworth raise the possibility that it is the concept of anthropomorphism itself that is responsible for the issue in the romantic period.

The representation of animals in romanticism suggests that the conception of nature by individual poets and artists is not entirely a cultural construction, but can be seen to begin, and even end, in awareness for palpably living non-human beings. By undermining easy distinctions between nature and culture, being and

non-being, these artists suggest that it is not so much the cultural construction of nature as the construction of a concept of culture that has reified human beings to the exclusion of all other life.

His conclusion of the second chapter is that the romantic poets provide us with early textual examples of "what Margot Norris has called a 'biocentric' imagination, one which attempts to collapse the 'cardinal distinctions between animal and human.'" (77)

III

Percy Bysshe Shelley is more consistent than Wordsworth in representing human consciousness as alienated from nature and demonstrating that we need nevertheless to acknowledge how we are dependent upon it. Oerlemans insists that such representation derives in part from Shelley's idea of vegetarianism. It is well known that he was a vegetarian for most of his life, and he wrote two pamphlets on his principles for the vegetable diet. Both essays insist that an awareness of diet leads to recognizing the interconnection between nature and consciousness, which will create in us an ecological imagination. The third chapter examines Shelley's commitment to vegetarianism to show how he is committed to the body in its material relationship with its environment. His vegetarianism not only reflects an ethical stance, but also is a way of exploring how consciousness and culture could themselves be materially based on the body to a world that remains other.

In his essays on the vegetable diet, Shelley argues that the violence most casually accepted and ignored is that which we inflict upon the animals we eat. When we sustain ourselves on animal food, we come to exploit animal life, metaphorically speaking, to wage a kind of war on nature, and to introduce physically and spiritually corrupting influences into our lives as a result. Animal food is not only the cause of most physical disease, but also that of all evil. So there should be a change to a vegetable diet that goes to the core of our spiritual and physical being.

'Mont Blanc' suggests Shelley's resistance to an idealism that would regard nature merely as an illusion and deny the importance of confronting the determinism of the material that is an essential part of his ecological ethic. In fact, consciousness itself is determined ultimately by the materiality of the universe, and yet the two are inaccessible to each other. The vast vision of 'Mont Blanc' beyond human nature shows us the acme of the natural world, which undermines utterly any sense of an anthropocentric nature. At last the poem undermines both the sense that there is a static order in the physical world and the sense that our consciousness is capable of grasping whatever complex order might be there.

'The Ode to the West Wind' suggests how human life is connected to the larger

cycles of nature, which are both destructive and indifferent to humankind. So the poem is very much concerned about discovering a hope in the materiality of nature that seems to proceed to its decay, recognizing that it is not merely born from or sustained by tropic substitution, but also is fundamentally connected to physical forces.

Considering "eating is the first version of self-fashioning," (105) the idea of Shelley's vegetarianism has a very close connection to the self-fashioned radical revolutionist Shelley. His essays on vegetarianism offer evidence of his understanding of a kind of materialism in which a revolution of thought and of society are obviously influenced by the substances ingested by our bodies. Finally the aim of Shelley's vegetarian revolution is to naturalize culture, and we can see this impetus in "The Ode to the West Wind" "in its attempt to see through culture to a natural order which would restore health and beauty to that culture." (122)

IV

Since Aristotle began classifying animals, determining what constitutes a species has been a complex problematic cognitive act. The romantic period partly overlapping the age of Linné and Darwin was an interesting and important time for the development of the idea of classifying each species in nature. Oerlemans' fourth chapter examines the abstract issue of fundamental taxonomic division for categorizing the natural world and its influence on and relation to romantic writings. The key issue here is the debate over the reality of such divisions, whether they are really of and in the natural world or constructed inevitably from human nature. Oerlemans argues that when the classificatory sciences achieve a certain dominance during the romantic period, such writers as John Clare, Gilbert White, and Shelley explore the ways in which taxonomy constrains us to limit our awareness of the particularity and materiality of the natural world. In other words, while taxonomy involves a desire to discover unity and pattern in the natural world, several writers in the period resist such categorization as obscuring and devaluing specific acts of perception. These writers recognize the loss of detail rather than the grain of knowledge placed in such a system.

According to Oerlemans, Coleridge is the only romantic-period author who explicitly and extensively concerns himself with the debate in natural history over the reality of species. In both his essays, *Theory of Life* and *Contributions to a Course of Lectures Given by J. H. Green*, the poet attempts to extract a theory on the order of life that seeks for the reality of species at its center. He finally identifies the essence of nature as that of humanity's apparent perfection as a species. Though it finally leads him to the difficulty in clearly demarcating individual species, he concludes that humanity is so clearly separated from the rest of the animal kingdom.

Shelley also shows us an abstract resistance to systematizing. Notions of natural hierarchy that are dependent upon ideas of fixed taxonomic boundaries are undermined. For him, nature is defined by relentless change and by the absence of constancy.

Gilbert White shows that there is virtually no sense of method, or a theory of organizing data. What counts is not the act to abstract something or find a universal similitude, but each natural fact that varies according to its place and time. He argues system "should be subservient to, not the main object of, pursuit." (138)

John Clare also emphasizes the individual over the species, and his empiricism is undoubtedly a way of seeing particularity and complexity in the natural world. For example, his "Emmonsails Heath in Winter" shows us a small but certain evidence that allows us to see how individual beings live together and how such a moment of co-existence can be complete without any desire to classify or separate. The particularized and individual language of his poetry not only reflects Clare as the specific and anti-universalizing observer, but also reveals a kind of shared or overlapping subjectivity of the observer and the observed.

Oerlemans concludes that the romantic period fortunately provides us with many examples that question systems of taxonomy and ideas about species' difference and discreteness rather than reify them.

V

It scarcely needs saying that travel writing is vitally concerned with beautifully depicting the materiality of nature, which has been one of the main concerns of Oerlemans's. The final chapter examines how travel writing reflects a romantic-period widespread interest in the physicality of real nature. Far from merely aestheticizing landscape or consuming it as a touristic object, such travel writing displays "a widespread and significant desire in writers and readers for the kind of 'thick description of the physical' that Lawrence Buell identifies as being central to an environmental imagination." (25) When we encounter new landscape, it seems to be alien and authentic, "because it seems consistent only with an awareness of the larger permanence and materiality of the natural world." (152) Oerlemans argues in the chapter for the psychoanalytical complexity of travel writing, because travel enforces an unfamiliar awareness of all landscapes and at the same time a sheer desire to discover the complex nature in landscapes.

"Even if (like Wordsworth's Boy of Winander) we are unaware of the impact of landscape, the physical enters and alters our consciousness." (154) Though we think of Wordsworth as a poet of the Lake District, who wrote intensively about a small portion of his familiar landscape that was continually available to the poet, a quick survey reveals that many great episodes of Wordsworth's autobiographical

poetry are connected with travel. Most of the definitive episodes of *The Prelude* involve traveling to or away from such landscape. For the poet, travel allows a confrontation with the unexpected, recognizing that any observation is necessarily just partial. After all, travel in *The Prelude* is a crucial part of the poet's connection to the natural world. Many of the central episodes of *The Prelude* present the poet explicitly seeking unfamiliar landscapes, such as crossing the Alps and Sarum's plain, and ascending Snowdon. Oerlemans intends to show how travel as an actual phenomenon is important to Wordsworth, that travel in itself, apart from the generic and ideological processes involved in representing it, is thematically central to Wordsworth's understanding of the material realm.

According to Oerlemans, Dorothy Wordsworth is relatively pragmatic in her descriptions of landscape. She understands the task of her writing not as self-exploration, but as the kind of documentation of external realities that is an essential component of much travel writing. Her travel writing does not aim directly to express individual identity, but to explore the physical context of human being that must be the ultimate ground for all social context. Almost all her journals are regularly punctuated with her observations of the physical world around her, which reveals that she felt herself to be engaged in an activity of perceiving and appreciating nature that was an essential component of her shared life with her brother. The episode of their visit to the rock of Dumbarton thus suggests Dorothy Wordsworth's sense of her alienation from the materiality of landscape, a sense that is nonetheless fuelled by a desire to see it as clearly as possible.

The romantic period sees the development of an interest in the material otherness of landscape by showing that such an interest exists in texts beyond those of traditional 'high culture' romanticism. Consciousness may take in a vast selection of images and have them become part of the language of memory, but the landscape remains exterior and other, unaffected by our gaze.

Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, poetry and the culture of gender*

Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003.

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The textual rediscovery of Charlotte Smith was probably occasioned by the growing importance, in the 1980s, of women's studies and feminist theory. Their combined influence had one particularly useful outcome: the publication of successive anthologies of women poets. The first to appear, in 1988, was *Kissing the*