

## Green Romantic Tradition and Ecocriticism

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### ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s, Romantic nature poetry in all its forms and genres—lyric, narrative, sonnet, ode, loco-descriptive, conversational, and contemplative--has been hailed as a good example of the Romantic poets' ecological awareness against the backdrop of the 18th century industrial revolution and environmental pollution. Famous for its spontaneous love and expression of the beauty of nature in all its aspects—peaceful or turbulent, “lakish” or oceanic—Romantic nature poetry not only imparts deep meaning to human life but also makes one read deeply into the biological and environmental life of land and nature on earth.

#### A. Wordsworth

Since the 1990s, Romantic nature poetry in all its forms and genres—lyric, narrative, sonnet, ode, loco-descriptive, conversational, and contemplative--has been hailed as a good example of the Romantic poets' ecological awareness against the backdrop of the 18<sup>th</sup> century industrial revolution and environmental pollution. Famous for its spontaneous love and expression of the beauty of nature in all its aspects—peaceful or turbulent, “lakish” or oceanic—that not only imparts deep meaning to human life but also makes one read deeply into the biological life of nature and its ecologically balanced, various, and harmonious growth and function on earth, Romantic poetry is known for its sympathetic feeling for the ordinary attached to the soil and their unaffected rustic simplicity. It draws its earthy vitality from the manifold expressions of nature as much as its farmers and shepherds do theirs by living close to their farms and fields and pastures described in it. All these have been seen as part of the larger social and political themes of liberty and humanity that Romantic poetry

directly engages with, rather than as part of the conventional Romantic aesthetic or escapist tendencies.

Rooted in a particular scenic locale—English Lake District or otherwise--, foundational Romantic texts are suffused with an intense realization of it through its landmark or somehow noticeable natural particulars such as lakes, rivers, valleys, woodlands, plains, hills, mountains, caves and trees (oak, elm, ash, larch, poplar, and yew, for example). If a historic cave romantically suggests mystery, prophecy, and creativity, it is also a feature of geographical and geological layout of the earth. Similarly, in nature's floor plan, an old oak is romantically taken to imply knowledge, wisdom, age, tradition, continuity, maturity and stability, but Wordsworth treats it from an environmentally political perspective too (see below).<sup>i</sup> The significance of a geographic location as suggested by Romantic natural imagery constitutes a crucial part of the meaning of a Romantic poem that is usually marked by a pictorial depiction of the flora and fauna

of that particular place. Scholars have taken into account the theory and history of Romantic environmentalism in their diverse yet complimentary ecocritical approaches to the treatment of nature in all forms of its wilderness—level or high, vacant or abundant, barren or full of foliage.

The idea of literary ecology or ecological study of literature first occurred to me when I saw at the NYU Bobst library, in 1994 (the year I completed my PhD on Wordsworth's later poetry), Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Routledge, 1991). As said in the online preview of the book, Bate "reassesses the poetry of William Wordsworth in the context of the abiding pastoral tradition in English Literature [...] and argues that contrary to critics who suggest that Wordsworth was a reactionary who failed to represent the harsh economic reality of his native Lake District, the poet's politics were fundamentally 'green'. As our first truly ecological poet, Wordsworth articulated a powerful and enduring vision of human integration with nature which exercised a formative influence on later conservation movements and is of immediate relevance to great environmental issues today. Challenging the orthodoxies of new historicist criticism, Bate sets a new agenda for the study of Romanticism in the 1990s."<sup>ii</sup>

Almost all of Wordsworth's poetry is both a Romanticized as well as a politically informed environmental celebration and memorialization of his English Lake District. No matter how purely pastoral and spiritual they outwardly seem to be, many of his poems such as the famous *Tintern Abbey* (1798), *Michael* (1800), and *The Prelude*, according to the New Historicist critics, Jerome McGann and Alan Liu, are a

conscious attempt to displace or erase contemporary social, political and historical events in favor of what he (McGann) calls *Romantic Ideology*.<sup>iii</sup> But on many occasions, the tide of the time is made clear. As a critic has pointed out, Book Eight of *The Excursion* gives a picture of the manufacturing industry expanding over the country that makes Bate comment that "Wordsworth's impassioned vision, the child's vitality is destroyed and his unity with nature is lost when he is put to work in a cotton mill."<sup>iv</sup> The *River Duddon* volume of 1820, Wordsworth's most popular volume of the time, is also one of his most politically and environmentally conscious volumes suggesting the continuity of tradition, heritage and stability (symbolized by the eternal flow of the Duddon and the human and natural life along its banks) in the manner of Edmund Burke, who was an epitome of conservative politics at the time.

One of Wordsworth's best tributes in prose to his dear Lakeland is *Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England*.<sup>v</sup> *Guide to the Lakes*, as it was later called, is a campaign, in tune with his contemporary conservatives such as Edmund Burke and Jane Austen, for the necessity to preserve "native immeasurable forests" and "ancient natural woods" pervaded by "sympathy and organization" in the fine connection of parts. In the *Guide* Wordsworth asserts the crucial importance of the "perception of the fine gradations by which in nature one thing passes away into another, and the boundaries that constitute individuality disappear in one instance only to be revived elsewhere under a more alluring form." He intends to establish that "sublimity will never be wanting where the sense of innumerable multitude is lost in and alternates with that intense unity." In an attempt to attend "environmental ethics and justice," Wordsworth is as much opposed to the import of the

French democratizing mob violence and revolutionary principles as he is to the foreign genus of spiky larch, which is planted for ornament or profit at the expense of indigenously grown trees. He is equally opposed to the ruthless changes in the original landscape for picturesque gardening by injudiciously felling local grown trees and levelling natural gradations in the ground. Unless justified by utmost consideration, any change being contemplated by contemporary reformers in landscape gardening to "improve" and turn the grounds for "the better" amounts to contrived picturesqueness, which Wordsworth considers to be an act of destruction of the innocence and freedom of unspoilt nature, a gross violation of its fullness and variety. In a striking resemblance to Burke, he relates the idea of improvement as held by landscape artists to that of political reforms sought by radical groups.

The *Guide* suggests Wordsworth's opposition to formal regularity and harsh contrast contrived by artificial planters as a means of gratification for the eye of those whose "unpractised minds" find pleasure in "distinct objects divided from each other by strong lines of demarcation." He strongly resents "harsh additions and removals" in artificial plantation, which only result in "deformity," "interruption" and "gross transgressions" on the "liberty that encourages and the law that limits this joint work of nature and time." In addition to the *Guide*, Wordsworth gives expression to his concept of the whole and unmutilated nature in a number of poems. He was exasperated to hear that the trees of Neidpath Castle overlooking the Tweed were being felled at the wish of the Duke of Queensberry and wrote the sonnet "Composed at Neidpath Castle" (1803) to express his outrage. In the note to "Epistle to Sir George Beaumont" (1812), he says, "Since this Epistle was written, Loughrigg Tarn has lost much of its beauty by the felling of many natural clumps of wood, relics of the old forest,

particularly upon the farm called 'The Oaks,' from the abundance of that tree which grew there." He fought against the Railway expansion into the Lake District because it would not only mar the natural beauty of the Lakes that was an object of the "pansing travellers' rapturous glance" but also take away the small inheritances of ordinary people who were deeply attached to them as their warmly cherished possession. The late sonnet "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" bears testimony to his such opposition. He attacks the project as a "blight," a "rash assault," a "ruthless change" and a "false utilitarian lure" against the romance of nature.

In my acquaintance with ecocriticism, after Bate's book, I came across, in 2004 in Malaysia (where I was then teaching), Karl Kroeber's *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (1994) in which he examines the ecological ideas of the Romantic poets, claiming that Romantic poetry was "the first literature to anticipate contemporary biological conceptions" and that the Romantic poets were "proto-ecological" in their intellectual orientation. Later I came to know of his 1974 article "Home at Grasmere" as the first, as pointed out by Peter Barry, to use the term *ecological*. Kroeber's volume was followed by Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) that laid down the theoretical basis that for a text to be approached ecologically and considered an "environmental text," the nonhuman element present is not merely "a framing device" but also "a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history." Years went by without me teaching in the Middle East venturing into the new and great field of literary studies--ecocriticism.

As one with a Romanticist background, familiar with different kinds of treatment of nature—descriptive, narrative, lyrical, pastoral, symbolic, allegorical, and poetically reflective and imaginative—, all in reaction to modern materialism, industrialism and commercialism, I have long cherished an intention to do a green reading of the Romantics, all of whom were great lovers of nature in its manifold manifestations—large and small, particular and general, quiet and stormy—for their own sake and their interest in collective and community health and happiness, common people and their simplicity, reform and revolution, and society and civilization. Pre-Romantics (like Robert Bloomfield, Robert Burns, John Clare, William Cowper, William Collins, George Crabbe, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Gray, and James Thomson) and the Romantics such as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats in their local and regional contexts have been popular subjects of modern ecological criticism. Their poetry is full of the imagery of landscape dominated either by the greenery of the desert expanse dotted with the objects of its own biogeography, or the inland/mainland of the whole organic complex attended by the indispensable solar and lunar atmosphere above and around. There is as much a presence of rural agricultural life, cyclical seasons/seasonal cycles, and the vagaries of life as there is the presence of light and air and rain and cloud without which no life would have been possible on earth. By way of human ecology and ecological interrelationship with the objects of biological nature, Romantic poetry suggests not only its interdependence on them but also the peace and freedom, health and happiness, renewal and survival, harmony and equilibrium, and satisfaction and consolation in the midst of human suffering, poverty,

and other man-made crises such as war, political tyranny, and industrial disaster.

### **B. Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Browning**

The youngest of the major Romantics, Keats, for example, offers an excellent green reading of his poems and has been receiving a great attention that he deserves in this respect.<sup>vi</sup> Despite the worries and anxieties related to his health and financial situation he felt like regaining health and spirit through his sensuous, social, and spiritual enjoyment of nature as it lives in its total and common ecosystem. Free from what he himself called the Wordsworthian “egotistical sublime,” Keats’s poetry offers a new way of seeing and responding to the natural world and its seasonal turns that as a whole make the human existence possible on earth, all in their inevitable rhythm playing their own role to instill and sustain life in all living things. His Grecian Urn is personified not only as “an unravished bride of quietness” and “a foster-child of silence” but also a “sylvan historian” of the life of the peaceful rural countryside. Compact and well-crafted, the Urn connects art with the human and the natural in the ecologically most perfect and sustainable way its artist could imagine. The ancient artifact not only combines the qualities of both Donne’s “well-wrought urn” and Grays’s “storied urn,” both of them culturally belonging to the urban upper class, polished and privileged, but also expresses the “flowery tale” and “leaf-fringed legend” of the countryside with the ever young pastoral lovers piping under the trees “unheard melodies” (sweeter than the heard) and “ditties of no tone” to the spiritual, as opposed to “the sensual ear.”<sup>vii</sup>

There are Ben Jonson's "earthen jars" and "frail pitcher" ("An Epistle...The Tribe of Ben") and Byron's "earth and earth-born jars/ And human frailties" (*Childe Harold* 3.14), both cases suggesting the fragility of poetic fame and success.<sup>viii</sup> Jars for storage or other purposes found in archeological excavations/explorations always represent human society and civilization from the ancient Greek times. Keats's Grecian Urn is not, however, a vessel or vehicle to express the brittleness of human fate. It has the priests permanently approaching the "green altar" for sacrifice of cows; folks permanently leaving their "little town by river or sea shore" in the morning; and the "marble men and maidens overwrought/ With forest branches and the trodden weed." All these images are true to ancient Greek life full of hunting and harvesting scenes depicted in arts—pottery, woodworks, or metal works. The image of the animal sacrifice is in common with a marble statue dating back to about 560 BC showing a man carrying a calf to a shrine for sacrifice to a deity on a certain occasion when the meat was cooked and eaten as a special food item.<sup>ix</sup>

The grounding of *Ode on a Grecian Urn* lies in the fact that Keats saw the object itself (the Urn), as he did the (Grecian) Elgin Marbles, during one of his visits to the British Museum's Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities in 1817-1819.<sup>x</sup> Those were from the Northern (European) side of the Mediterranean. On the other side across the Mediterranean was the Pharaonic Egypt and its Greco-and-Roman antiquities (including the broken statue of Shelley's Ozymandias), some of which, as described by Nancy Jenkins, were strikingly similar to the ideal pastoral pictures engraved on Keats's Grecian Urn:

Among the most interesting finds from museum excavations in Egypt have been those from burials at Heliopolis, Asyutand Gebelein - not rich pharaonic tombs, but the graves of simple landowners and rather minor government officials. The panoply of grave goods is both touching in its simplicity - the sandals, the light linen shift for summer wear, the wig of Merit, as finely braided as though it had just come from the hairdresser, humble salt and bunches of garlic for meals in the hereafter - and stunning in its richness: the rich gold leaf and lapis and turquoise of coffins, coffin covers and sarcophagi, the unguents from Ethiopia and Lebanon, jewels and alabaster vases and intricately-worked toiletry boxes. One room is covered with wall paintings from the tomb of Iti, a headman and leader of commercial and mining expeditions during the confused years between the Old and Middle Kingdoms, around 2100 B.C. *The paintings are crude and provincial, perhaps even old-fashioned, but nonetheless charming in their depiction of Iti's life: Iti with Nubian prisoners, with his hunting dog, with his servants, and marvelous renderings of agricultural scenes: milking the cow; herdsmen separating two fighting bulls; bringing in the harvest to the granary while the scribe notes it all down; slaughtering a bull, perhaps as a sacrifice since one man holds a bowl to collect the bull's blood while another realistically braces himself, one leg against the bull's flank, while he tugs the rope that holds the bull still. Paintings such as these are almost unique in their antiquity and their state of preservation, and they*

supply us with far more information about how Egyptians actually lived than all the gold and gems of Tutankhamen (my emphasis).<sup>xi</sup>

An ecological consideration of Keats's treatment of nature is to attempt a green reading of him investigating his thematically rich poetry from the perspective of Romantic environmental conception. It is yet another meaningful way to look at him as one close to and nourished by earth, not one limited to the traditional confines of his form-consciousness aestheticism, amoral sensuousness, and the pictorial quality of his word pictures. His poetry is deep and dense, spiritual as well as sensual, every rift of which is loaded with ore, to borrow the idea from his own advice to Shelley. Personified as a "Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun" and a gleaner sitting carelessly on the granary floor with her "hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind" and her "laden head across a brook," Keats's figure of Autumn is a "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" that competes with the sun in the ripening process of the crops and fruits on the pasture.<sup>xii</sup> The earth-grown details of the poem like Autumn as a farmer patiently watching "the last ooziings hours by hours" from a cyder-press make Keats also a keen watcher of nature's seasonal activities like loading the farmlands, cottage trees and stubble plains with ripe produce and the flight of songbirds (hedge-crickets, swallows, redbreasts) over. Watching the jumping and chirping sounds of small seasonal birds and insects, he declares, "The poetry of earth is never dead" (or "The poetry of earth is ceasing never" in the same poem), foreshadowing Tennyson describing the units of his elegy *In Memoriam*, written over a period of seventeen years, as "short swallow flights of song."

Keats wrote *To Autumn* on 19 September 1819, at the height of his skill. He had just returned from a stroll near the town of Winchester in Hampshire, England. As he put it in a letter to his friend J.H. Reynolds, his close to perfect style cannot overshadow, as in *Ode to a Nightingale*, the materiality of the spot/place he was so happy with:

How beautiful the season is now – How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather – Dian skies – I never lik'd stubble fields so much as now – Aye better than the chilly green of spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm – in the same way that some pictures look warm – this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it.<sup>xiii</sup>

What the naturalists and nature writers are in their prose, Keats and Wordsworth are in their poetry. Even in selections, their poetry would suffice to rate them high as green conscious poets. It is as if they love the works of nature not just for the health of their own and inner being, their mind, and their spirit but for their own sake. It is as if they feel great and glorious by being close to the organic growth in nature and staying bonded with it in a living manner. As Wordsworth says, he would like to see his days "to be bound each to each by natural piety." Both Keats and Wordsworth would like to stay as functional and interactive (not just contemplative only) as the movement of the seasonal cycle itself. With Spring and Summer also referred to in addressing the Autumn, each season being described as having its own "music" in the processes of nature, Keats feels blessed and benefited in return. What he implies is the obvious: that not just the common humanity but the human community as a whole

cannot do without being fostered, nourished, nurtured or mothered by a natural environment where the more speaking and pulsating nature is, the better for health and human services nearby and all around.

Keats's *To Autumn* (composed 19 September 1819) is historicized to have erased or occluded the month-old Peterloo Massacre of 16 August. The Massacre took place at St Peter's Field, Manchester, England, where the cavalry charged into a crowd of 60,000–80,000 who had gathered to demand parliamentary reforms and to protest the Corn Laws affecting the ordinary farmers and families. About 15 people were killed. Shelley in Italy heard about it on 5 September and immediately wrote *The Masque of Anarchy* in protest containing what was "perhaps the first modern statement of the principle of nonviolent resistance." Suppression of contemporary political events, if any, in favor of quietly meditative/contemplative or ecological/environmental treatment of Autumn by Keats is an example partly similar to Coleridge's "Destruction of the Bastille" (composed 1789, p. 1834), one of his early poems in radical support and sympathy for the French Revolution. Full of conventional liberal abstractions such as Freedom, Disdain, Tyranny, Hope, Anguish, Oppression, Frenzy, and Liberty, the poem (with its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stanzas missing) is an exciting outburst on the destruction of the famous prison fortress by the revolutionaries in France on 14 July 1789. Although the poem does not contain any details of the circumstances that led to the overthrow of the ruling oppressors, the political subject and substance of the poem, including its title, are clear, far from being an erasure or exclusion. Similarly, the resemblance of what we have, in the fifth stanza of the poem – a happy peasant watching with joy his crops grow—to

Keats's personified figure of Autumn also watching its seasonal agricultural abundance is unmistakable:

I see, I see! glad Liberty succeed

With every patriot virtue in her train!

And mark yon peasant's raptur'd eyes;

Secure he views his harvests rise;...

Keats was perhaps influenced by this short scene of rapture to further develop it into a fuller picture of overflowing contentment in his poem. Both poems, including Keats's *Nightingale Ode* of about the same time with reference to the sad mythical Ruth getting lost in "alien corn," have directly to do with the production and protection of grain at home (as opposed to the import of foreign grain) and thereby indirectly with the controversial Corn Laws, instead of bypassing them altogether.

Keats's earth-bound tendencies are not different from those as expressed by Pope's "Ode on Solitude" (also known as "Happy the Man"), Cowper's "God made the country, and man made the town" (*The Task*), and Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" that describes the double pleasure of the "wealthy show of nature" (that is, the objects of nature, in this case, the daffodils, clouds and stars along the shores of the Ullswater lake)—as the poet first sees them and then as he later remembers them. This remembrance provides him with a brief relief from his personal loneliness and possibly economical and existential worries and anxieties as suggested by "vacant or pensive moods."<sup>xiv</sup> It is the invaluable wealth of nature that brings him a life-giving joy as in the rhapsodic "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky") and that brings Housman the lesson of how best to live this short life as in his "Loveliest of trees the cherry now," both poems

containing the poets' curious plan about how to spend the remainder of their lives in a healthy spirit by experiencing the beauty of nature afforded to them in a certain way. With exceptions (at least parts of Blake, Byron, and Shelley), there is generally a Wordsworthian presence to be noticed in the Romantic tradition in terms of (the appearance of) a quiet, ordered, happy and harmonious existence grounded in the natural.

As mentioned early on, Shelley's highly political *Ozymandias* (a competition sonnet along with his friend Horace Smith's sonnet on the same topic and published in early 1818) about the fall of the mighty in history, including the fall of Napoleon who fell in 1815, can also be read in the context of modern ecology. Shelley's treatment of the waste of long-gone Pharaonic (and by implication contemporary Napoleonic) empires predicts the end of modern tyranny and was indebted to Volney's *Travels in Syria* and *The Ruins: A Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires* (1791), both of which, especially the famous latter, were a reflection on the rise and fall of civilizations. The *Meditation*, also known as *A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires* moves from dystopian to utopian with an indication of "a golden future [...] according to the laws of nature." In any case, "Most often read as an ironic commentary on the vanity of political ambition and the inevitable downfall of the tyranny," Shelley's *Ozymandias*, according to James McKusick, may also be regarded,

[...] from an ecocritical point of view, as an object lesson in unsustainable environmental practices. Well-versed in history, Shelley was certainly aware that the ancient Mediterranean world was formerly a place of great agricultural fertility and abundance.

Over many centuries, the dense forests described by Homer were felled; the cedars of Lebanon were destroyed; the irrigation of arid areas resulted in the toxic accumulation of salt in the soil; and eventually these paradisaical landscapes were converted into barren deserts. The statue of Ozymandias lies shattered in the midst of a desert, and the surrounding landscape offers a grim commentary on the relatively brief duration of the civilization that he commanded.<sup>xv</sup>

A correlation between Shelley's *Ozymandias* and the ancient North African deforestation can be easily established by referring to the lost African kingdoms and civilizations of Nubia and the Nile Valley, which were often overshadowed by those in ancient Egypt. According to archeologists Graham Chandler and Mary McDonald, new archeological finds of the ruins of settled life in the Western Desert of Egypt bear conclusive evidence that there was a connection between the desert and the pharaohs, whose Dynastic civilization actually began in the western Egyptian desert, and not, as was long thought, in the migration of people from the thousand-year earlier Mesopotamian civilization that had grown on the north east. Though extremely barren and hostile in modern times, the westerly desert was home to ancient Egypt's Neolithic community. Environmentally speaking, it was the global climate change that was behind the emergence and collapse of that community just as it was responsible for the rise and fall of many other old organized urban systems such as the Mayan in Peru/Andes Mountains and the Garamantes in the Fezzan region of southwestern Libya. Western Sahara (whose eastern end is the Western Nile Valley in Egypt and Sudan referred to above), which is dry



and desolate today due to the weakening of the global monsoon system resulting in droughts, was once green with forests and wildlife, about ten thousand years ago. Chandler and McDonald discuss the issues of human responses to the impact of drastic changes in climate thousands of years ago in their jointly authored articles.<sup>xvi</sup>

In other words, climatic and environmental change played a significant role, as it always does, in the flourishing of both wild nature and human civilization as it was also associated with their decline. If it made human survival possible in one place, it made human adaptation impossible in another due to dying natural resources. More or less 2300 years ago, Peter Harrigan and Dick Doughty describe, there were short-lived Nabataean settlements on red sandstone cliffs in what was their capital city Petra, now in modern Jordan. Their second largest city was Hegra (“Rocky Tract”), today called Mada’in Salih (“the cities of Salih,” in reference to the pre-Islamic Prophet Salih), close to Petra, but now located in modern Saudi Arabia’s most famous archeological site in Saudi north. While still a mystery, these Roman-conquered natural-rock necropolises, long-abandoned, provide further examples of desert civilizations lying under the desert sands. Still to be fully explored and excavated, they were once visited by English traveler Charles Doughty in 1876 and later by Frenchmen Charles Huber, Ernest Rernan, Antonin Jaussen, and Raphael Savignac.<sup>xvii</sup>

Shelley’s desert ecology in *Ozymandias* anticipates Yeats’s in *The Second Coming* (1919), also a political poem about the nightmarish prospect of the wars in Europe. The poem, shrouded in Christian religious imagery, describes the image of

the “rough beast” slouching towards Jesus’s birthplace Bethlehem in the Arab land,

[...] somewhere in sands  
of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the  
head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the  
sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all  
about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant  
desert birds.

Literary ecology could therefore very well be extended to religions too; for example, the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad, in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, declared the cutting of trees and killing of animals forbidden, especially during the war, as much as he declared the killing of old men and women, children, and surrendering soldiers forbidden. He recommended that a tree or seed be sown until or even before the doomsday. It would not be a non sequitur if a reading of Chris Wood’s essay “Dry Spring: The Coming Water Crisis of North America” that begins with the importance of water as stressed in Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism, is made more interesting by a reference to “Water, water, everywhere,/And all the boards did shrink;/Water, water, everywhere,/Nor any drop to drink,” from Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* that illustrates a moral and religious lesson at the end of a story of crime and punishment:

He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.  
He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

That is the lesson the Ancient Mariner learns from his willful and careless crime of killing the lone and harmless albatross giving him and his suffering crew a welcome company on the lonely sea.

Far from taking an ecocritical approach, my paper on *Kubla Khan* (first presented at a conference mentioned above and later published) was, however, a New Historicist study of the personal, political, scientific, and eastern other in the poem. The poem is a demonstration of the human/royal interest in power visually symbolized by palaces and their political/imperial decline, as impermanent as the poet's curious dream itself. Now I know that the poem set in the middle of magically creative natural phenomena -- woody, riverine, and geological -- as captured in the poet's precarious dream--would also yield a fertile ground for an earthbound de-historicizing ecocriticism. It is as if the timelessness of the underground geological aspect of the poem is an ironic commentary on Kubla's historical/worldly ambition and his dream of pomp and splendor enshrined in the eternally operating natural surroundings.

Contemporary geological findings deeply impacted both Coleridge and Shelley and, later, Tennyson too, who was beset with doubts about the creation of life in light of his own study of geology and other sciences. His contemporary Browning is set to put all such doubts to rest when he has his Pippa sing in a way of constructed, rather than natural nature:

The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;

Morning's at seven;  
The hillside's dew-pearl'd;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn:  
God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world!

In another poem (a dramatic monologue), however, in which Browning would satirically dismiss the Victorian controversies caused by the evolutionary theory of Darwin, a geo-biologist, about the existence of God and man's origins on earth, his conception of nature is more natural. In the poem, Browning suggests that contemporary theologians were perhaps as incomplete in their concept of God as his (actually Shakespeare's) humanoid savage beast Caliban is in his natural and hierarchical theology limited to his animal surroundings on the island—the 'quiet' over Setebos over Prospero over Caliban over lesser creatures. Half-man half-monster Caliban's reflections about his deity Setebos, as brutal and barbaric as Caliban, are equally partial as himself. Alone in his cave, Caliban's free thoughts about Setebos who he thinks is his creator derive from his empirical observations of himself and other animals, as many as 63 of them, that are referred to in the poem. He thinks Setebos, spiteful, must have been unhappy without a mate and so created the Earth, out of frustration, "a bauble-world" that to him operates strangely without sense and in the misery of natural disasters and hierarchical controls one over the other.

As I mentioned elsewhere, Coleridge, in collaboration with Southey, wished to write a long poem on Prophet Mohammad in 1799 as a radical reformer and liberator (as Thomas Carlyle would write a long essay on him as one of his heroes in the early 1840s).<sup>xviii</sup> All of them (including Thomas Jefferson, for sure) probably had a copy of the English translation of the meanings of the Quran,

Islam's holy book, made by George Sale in 1734 from his own knowledge of Arabic: "Translated into English immediately from the original Arabic," as mentioned on the cover page.<sup>xix</sup> In any case, Coleridge's fragmentary "Mahomet" was intended as a short contribution to his and Southey's collaborative effort, to be called, *The Flight and Return of Mohammad* that, like their "Pantisocracy" plans, never materialized. However, their knowledge of the life of the Prophet and the meanings of the Quran left its mark on their other poetical works, *Kubla Khan* (1799) and *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801).<sup>xx</sup> It is very likely that *Kubla Khan* with its stately structures, sacred rivers and mysterious fountains forcefully flowing from under the ground, fruitful gardens around, and the Biblical milk and honey bears a great affinity and therefore may have been influenced by the oft-repeated descriptions of paradise throughout the Quran. The Book of Islamic scripture says, for example:

39.20 But it is for those who fear their Lord.  
*Those lofty mansions, one above another,*  
have been built: *beneath them flow rivers (of*  
*delight) ...;*

47.12 Verily God will admit those who  
believe and do righteous deeds, to *Gardens*  
*beneath which rivers flow;*

47.15 (Here is) a Parable of the Garden  
which the righteous are promised: in it are  
*rivers of water* incorruptible; *rivers of milk*  
of which the taste never changes; *rivers of*  
*wine, a joy to those who drink;* and *rivers of*  
*honey* pure and clear. In it there are for them  
*all kinds of fruits;* and Grace from their  
Lord.

88.12-16 Therein will be *a bubbling spring:/*  
Therein will be Thrones (of dignity), raised  
on high;/ Goblets placed (ready),/ And  
cushions set in rows, And rich carpets (all)  
spread out.<sup>xxi</sup>

The grandness of God's House on earth, the Kaaba, as Muslims believe it to be, lies, somewhat oxymoronically, in its cubical simplicity, with its immediate vicinity and the surrounding valley famous for the living memories of Abraham, Ishmael, and Hajar. One of those immortal memories is the sudden surfacing of the holy miraculous spring, *Zam-Zam*, ceaselessly gushing forth, for thousands of years now, out of the still unknown underground sources right below the cubical Kaaba. These aspects of the holy sanctuary in Mecca have their resonating and resounding echoes in *Kubla Khan*.

The Quran, believed to be divinely revealed, frequently describes the heavenly beauty of the paradise in terms of the natural beauty on earth. There is a profusion of references to the celestial bodies--the sky, the sun, the moon, and the stars all subjected to a fixed orbiting law, each running its course for a term appointed or exactly computed with the night as a veil over the day, both day and night merging into each other. But the holy Book is also complete with numerous allusions to nature and natural phenomena on the earth itself, from the common to the calamitous, creative to destructive. It gives examples and analogies of all kinds-- birds, animals, insects (cow, elephant, bee, spider, ant, martin swallow), trees, crops, rivers, springs, oceans, mountains, wind and rain, time and tide, flood, storm, plagues, earthquake, mornings, evenings, and afternoons. Mention is made of all these earthly and heavenly things not only as the sign of the existence of a supreme lord and creator, a master builder or an

ultimate artist but also as sources or causes that make life, human as well as nonhuman, possible on earth in an ecologically balanced and organically vital way. This is insisted upon many times throughout the Book. To paraphrase only some of the Quranic verses in this regard:

God spread out the earth as a wide expanse, like a carpet, for the use and convenience of its creatures—humans, the cattle, and the beasts—all created in pairs. There are lofty mountains standing firm and, like a peg, causing the earth to remain steady, preventing it from shaking. In the mountains there are diverse tracts, white and red, of various shades of color, mainly black. There are roads and highways between the mountains for movement and guidance of all. There are flowing rivers and there is a separating bar between the two bodies of water in the seas. There are ships sailing through the oceans, tossing in the waves and reaching the land safely. At times there are droughts and shortness of crops. God produced on earth all kinds of things **in due balance**, every kind of beautiful growth. There are fruits of every kind, herbs, tall stately trees, gardens of vines, fields sown with corn, and trees growing out of single roots, watered with the same water, yet some being more excellent than others. And God sends down rain from the skies, and gives therewith life to the earth after its death. It is the rain that causes trees and orchards to grow; and gardens and grains for harvest. There are leaves, shoots and stalks for fodder as there are sweet-smelling plants and sweet and wholesome water to drink. There are milk from cattle and honey from bee, healing and wholesome drinks; produce of various colors to eat; blessings of nourishment and sustenance **in due proportion** from the moisture and pasture.<sup>xxii</sup> The last of the many similar verses seems

to be worth-quoting for its comprehensiveness and inclusiveness:

80.24-32 Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it): For that We pour forth water in abundance, And We split the earth in fragments, And produce therein corn, And Grapes and nutritious plants, And Olives and Dates, And enclosed Gardens, dense with lofty trees, And fruits and fodder, -- For use and convenience to you and your cattle.

All the above, no matter how religiously and spiritually oriented toward an understanding of God, are earth-centered and environmental in design and conception. They are all as balanced and vigorous as the garden landscape in *Kubla Khan*:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round;  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous  
rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing  
tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

The crucial difference is that while God's holy description of the earthly surface is livingly and realistically natural, Coleridge's "A savage place! as holy and enchanted," "miracle of rare device," "deep romantic chasm," "sacred river," "mighty fountain," "sunless sea," "lifeless ocean," "caverns measureless to man" and "ceaseless turmoil seething" seem to be as constructed as dreamy and visionary. His

construction of nature in *Kubla Khan* is of course rare (though similar to his predecessors, Milton and Beckford, see below) and totally unlike his other great compositions in nature poems. His *Frost at Midnight*, like Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, is a seminal English Romantic poem, both being, first and foremost, about the "environmentality" (a term used by Buell) of ecologically extended natural surroundings around homes and abbeys in the form of interior monologue, contemplative yet conversational. However, both are arguably occluding and erasing the social and political elements of the time in a new historicist manner, one (Coleridge's) suppressing the poet's patriotism amid his solitary fears of the French invasion of England and the other (Wordsworth's) the economic suffering of the poor down the river Wye.

The ecologically and environmentally green theme runs deep through the body of English/Western pastoral literature, from Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Theocritus's *Idylls*, Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," Raleigh's anti-pastoral "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" and Sidney's "The Twenty-Third Psalm" and "The Nightingale," Milton's *Lycidas*, Pope's *Windsor Forest* and *Pastorals*, Thomas Gray's "Elegy on a Country Churchyard," Thomson's *The Seasons*, and John Clare's *The Shepherd's Calendar* to the entire spectrum of the Romantic and pre-Romantic poetry, including the pastoral elegies such as Shelley's *Adonais*, and Arnold's *Thyrsis*. While the pastoral tradition referring to a line of creative works that praise or idealize rural carefree leisure, outdoor solitude, peaceful environment of sheep and shepherds, countryside landscapes, and the cultivation of land by farmers and their experiences of farm life is not to be

confused or identified with the ecocritical view of literature, it is, however, not to be excluded either from the broad understanding and interpretation of literature as afforded by ecocriticism. Both are mutually inclusive, rather than exclusive. There is a sense of realistic ecological and environmental flourish and fecundity, and, at the same time, balance and harmony about literary pastoralism that presupposes an intrinsic beauty and significance of the earth and nature and is essentially embedded and embowered in the interaction and coordination between the human and the nonhuman. It is to be pointed out here that literary pastoralism was established, ironically, by cultured urban poets whose nice portrayals of rural lifestyle and its simple joys may have led to an impression of some "fantasies and misconceptions" about it.

To take note of a few more publications in this regard, it is only fitting that Worster elaborates on the idea of "the economy of nature" in his *Nature's Economy* (1977), which is a study of the historical foundations of the Romantic understanding of the natural world, tracing the origins of the modern scientific concept of ecology to the 18th century from the perspective of the world as a harmonious, self-regulating system.<sup>xxiii</sup> Arguing that poets are decisively influenced by particular places, David McCracken's *Wordsworth and the Lake District* (1985) looks at the habitat of Wordsworth's literary production and thereby explores the rootedness of his poems in the topography of particular places. Informed by specific images of mountains, lakes and rivers, the concrete geographical context of his poetry, McCracken asserts, is complete with maps and walking guides.

Onno Oerlemans's *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (2002) situates British

Romantic poetry in the hard physical reality and seeks to place Wordsworth and Shelley within the intellectual contexts of their period, while bringing to the fore the core element of poetic production—the underlying nourishing biological substance consisting of the rocks and stones and trees that form the very basics of poetry. Such an existential approach bears affinity with McCracken’s geographical point of view. However, unlike the latter’s endeavor to use poems as a tour guide, Oerlemans examines the way in which the natural phenomena are transformed by poetic consciousness into linguistic artefacts. Synthesizing the current eco-critical views, he explores, according to the editorial review, “not only the ideas of poets and artists, but also those of philosophers, scientists, and explorers and draws liberally on such fields as literary criticism, the philosophy of science, travel literature, environmentalist policy, art history, biology, geology, and genetics, creating a fertile mix of historical analysis, cultural commentary, and close reading. Through this, we discover that the Romantics understood how they perceived the physical world, and how they distorted and abused it.”

### C. Keats, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Romantic Birds and Crows

To return back to Keats, his beautiful “The grasshopper and cricket” is one of the sonnets composed on occasional quarter-of-an-hour extemporaneous competitions between Keats and Hunt. The others include “On Receiving a Laurel Crown From Leigh Hunt” and “On Seeing a Lock of Milton’s Hair.” A similar competition that made Keats produce “To the Nile” involved Shelley also (see more about the sonnet below).<sup>xxiv</sup> In each case it was Hunt who had proposed the subject and to whom

Keats dedicated his first volume. Composed on 30 December 1816, this sonnet about the two little charming creatures explores “two landscapes and two poetic worlds,” emphasizing the contrast between summer noon and winter evening as represented by the jumping and cheerful grasshopper and the half-contemplative cricket respectively. One in its delight “takes the lead/In Summer luxury” and the other helps to dispel the winter cold with its shrill song. Both the grasshopper and the cricket are described as being happy and cheerful in their own seasons in the hills and hedges, trees and grasses. A critic suggests that the sonnet is Keats’s equivalent of Milton’s *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*: “first the convivial spirit who joins in and celebrates the life going on around him, and then the solitary spirit who creates an alternative world in the imagination.” While the glad grasshopper and its festive noisiness are described in a language of comedy, “the cricket’s more refined creativity magically emerges out of the darkness [...] The grasshopper’s simple happiness [...] is countered by the cricket’s meditative ability to transform experience and change winter to summer. In doing so he represents the power of the fancy.”<sup>xxv</sup>

It is to be pointed out that the literary treatment of the grasshopper goes back to Aesop’s *Fables* where it runs and sings all summer, in contrast with the wise ant that keeps busy in saving for the winter. While the grasshopper lives in carefree idleness, the industrious ant lays up stores for the winter. It is a fable referred to by Spenser in the tenth (October) eclogue of *The Shepherd’s Calendar* where the shepherd poet Cuddie uses up all his poetical powers in the pastoral singing contest. The ant is represented by Piers (Spenser himself) who lays up supplies for winter, and the grasshopper who does not lies subdued.

In the Greek Anacreontic poems, the grasshopper is praised for its song and its love of drinking the wine of dew. Abraham Cowley would creatively translate the original Anacreontic poem on the fiddling (as opposed to piping) grasshopper describing the “happy insect” as “voluptuous [...] Epicurean animal” for its love of enjoyment: “Sated with thy summer feast,/Thou retirest to endless rest.” Cowley’s contemporary Richard Lovelace in his Anacreontic ode “The Grasshopper” takes his summer creature to represent the royalist carefree Cavalier mode of life during the Puritan “winter” under Oliver Cromwell that followed the beheading of Charles I in 1649. His grasshopper symbolizes the loss of the king and represents the Cavalier ideals of women, wine, and royalism at their most attractive. Keats’s treatment of the grasshopper compares well with how it has been taken traditionally but the summer pleasures of the grasshopper and the winter song of the cricket in the frost-wrought silence are rendered fresh and charming in his sonnet that begins with an imaginative glorification of “the poetry of earth.”

There are hundreds of bird poems in literature. “Although they are as commonplace as our backyards, birds remain wild, unpossessed by humans, living ‘beside us, but alone’, as Matthew Arnold observes and as Leonard Lutwack explores in this study of the depiction of birds in literature.”<sup>xxvi</sup> (Like the cuckoo, cricket, grasshopper, skylark, thrush, swan, swallow, peacock, crow, sparrow, robin, redbreast, hawk, raven, wild duck, albatross, seagull, spotted owl and red wolf), nightingale is another bird popular in nature poetry—as popular as eagle, though the two being completely different in characteristics serve different purposes.<sup>xxvii</sup> The earliest introduction of both Western and non-Western/international school children to the Western

nightingale (the same as Persian/Indian bulbul) perhaps occurs through Wordsworth’s, one of the greenest nightingales ever (along with his cuckoo too) in “The Solitary Reaper”:

No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands:  
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

In *Reader's Digest* British nature writer Richard Mabey introduces the nightingale as a small brown bird, which has been popular for its song since the Roman Empire. He mentions that it has had a number of roles in Western culture—from a wood spirit to a symbol and messenger of love to a harbinger of spring. At one time listening to the nightingale became “a euphemism for sexual frolicking” and then it was used in “love potions and in nostrums for improving the voice.” Mabey reports that in 1924 there was a live outside broadcast of “a duet between a nightingale and Beatrice Harrison, Britain’s leading cellist at the time, which the BBC transmitted from her woodland garden.”<sup>xxviii</sup> When the American nature writing scholar Scott Slovic, along with two other Japanese professors, visited in 1993 an eighty-four year-old Japanese farmer/philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka, the author of *The One-Straw Revolution*, in the remote mountains and asked him if the university they belonged to could contribute anything to their understanding of nature through lectures, theories, texts, and laboratories, Fukuoka replied that they should listen to birds’ song, pointing to the nightingale (“uguisu” in Japanese) singing outside his

hut. Slovic relates the story to highlight the significance of direct contact with nature and the physical world out there.<sup>xxix</sup>

The concept of the happy nightingale, unknown in old poetry, came perhaps from Coleridge's conversation poem *The Nightingale*. Of seminal importance in launching the Romantic Movement, the poem contains the simple but haunting line, "In Nature there is nothing melancholy." Coleridge made the statement probably in response to Milton's melancholy nightingale in *Il Penseroso*, in which Philomel (that is, nightingale) is described as a melancholic person's favorite bird—a sad bird—as opposed to the sweet lark. Keats's Nightingale, no matter how anthropomorphized it may seem to be, is also an entirely earthly bird of "country green" and "verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways," as the young Ruth in the poem, however mythical she may be, is "sad at heart" and "sick for home amid the alien corn." The Nightingale is a "light-winged Dryad of the trees," singing from the "melodious plot/Of beechen green and shadows numberless." It not only makes the poet "too happy in [her] happiness" but also leads him to understand that happiness is eternal for the Nightingale as a species of birds and as a representative of the natural world,

Thou wast not born for death,  
immortal Bird!

No hungry  
generations tread thee down;

The voice I hear this passing night  
was heard

In ancient days by  
emperor and clown ...,

The Bird also makes Keats understand that happiness is only momentary for humans for whom pain is

more lasting in their real world. As soon as he realizes that he cannot stay too long with the eternally happy Nightingale, feeling reduced to a mere sod to its "high requiem," he undercuts the role of the imagination as "a deceiving elf." Keats's treatment of the Nightingale is exactly in line with his earlier treatment of it, environmentally cool and with lessons for the humankind:

It is a flaw

In happiness to see beyond our  
bourne--

It forces us in summer skies to  
mourn;

It spoils the singing of the  
nightingale.

*To J. H. Reynolds*  
(1818), ll.282-85.

For I have ever thought that it might bless  
The world with benefits  
unknowingly;

As does the nightingale, up perched  
high,

And cloister'd among cool and  
bunched leaves--

She sings but to her love, nor e'er  
conceives

How tiptoe Night holds back her  
dark-grey hood.

*Endymion* (1818),  
Bk.I, ll. 826-31.

Sometimes referred to as Philomel (from the mythical Philomela), the Nightingale received countless poetic treatments in Western literature, from religious/Christian, secular, erotic, feminine, metaphorical, supernatural, and sad or happy points of view.<sup>xxx</sup> In her *Interpreting Nightingales: Gender, Class, Histories*, Jeni Williams analyzes the changing poetical, cultural and political roles accorded to the



bird as a subject from the Greeks to the Victorians. Duncan Wu has an anthology of poems, *Immortal Bird: The Nightingale in Romantic Poetry*, in which he illustrates the achievement of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" compared with the other poems of the Romantic period about the bird.<sup>xxxii</sup>

As mentioned above, Keats's "To the Nile" (1816) was one of his competition sonnets. The Egyptian/Mediterranean Nile was made famous by the British Admiral Horatio Nelson's Battle of the Nile when he defeated the French forces in August 1798. A tragic incident of the catastrophic French defeat that happened on July 28 was captured by Mrs Felicia Hemans in her immortal "Casabianca" (published in 1826), about a preteen boy caught in flames on the French ship L'Orient. In any case, it is a "fruitful" Nile that, as Keats describes in the sonnet, fills the "green rushes" with moisture. In keeping with his interest in the luxuriantly natural setting, he wrote a number of poems in imitation of Spenser early in his life. His Spenserians are reflective of Spenser's theory, in *The Faerie Queene*, that life is spontaneously generated by the sun's influence on the moist earth, a theory drawn from Ovid and Lucretius who in the biology of their mind thought that countless creatures were formed in the mud as it was acted upon by the sunshine after the Nile's inundation.

In the form of crocodiles (crocs), nature seems to have a bloody crush on human history and literature, with the world's oldest African crocodile turning 114 in 2014.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Apart from Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Theophrastus, who were among the earliest to record their observations about natural history (James Hutton, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, and Charles Darwin among the early moderns), "early conceptions of ecology, such as a balance and regulation in nature, can be traced to Herodotus (d.

425 BC), who provided one of the earliest accounts of mutualism in his view of 'natural dentistry'. Basking Nile crocodiles, he noted, would open their mouths to give sandpipers (a large family of waders or shorebirds) safe access to pluck leeches out, giving nutrition to the sandpiper and oral hygiene for the crocodile." (From the Wikipedia entry on ecology). The Nile is said to be a home to the world's largest species of crocodiles. Its banks abound these huge crocodiles that are also associated with the legends of ancient Egyptian god Osiris. In Plutarch, the crocodile stands for Typhon, not for Osiris. Typhon is the irrational part of the soul but poets transform the myths for their own purposes. Fifteenth century Cairo scholar al-Maqrizi mentions an antidote to noisy croaking frogs: a mixture of crocodile fat with clarified butter. In Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*: "It is cold winter here," says the swallow [to the prince]. "In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lazily lie in the mud." While Dickens's David Copperfield reads bedtime stories about crocs to the old nurse and housekeeper Peggotty, in J M Barrie's *Peter Pan* a saltwater crocodile pursues Peter's archenemy Captain Hook whose right hand is severed by Peter in a duel and eaten up by the croc. There is a folk story from Bangladesh called The Fox and the Crocodile. In his sonnet, Keats describes the Nile as "Chief of the Pyramid and Crocodile!"

Crocodiles are believed to weep hypocritically so as to attract their prey. Hence the byword "crocodile tears" to mean hypocrisy. In *The Mask of Anarchy* (St. 6), written in response to the Peterloo massacre in Manchester on 16 August 1819, Shelley personifies "hypocrisy" riding on a crocodile. In *The Faerie Queene* (Book I Canto V), the wicked Duessa is compared to a crafty male crocodile as she shows false outward grief over Redcross Knight's

wounds. In Book V Canto VII the chaste lady knight Britomart stops at the Temple of Isis on her way to rescue the Knight of Justice Artegall. She sleeps at the foot of Isis' statue and dreams a strange dream that a crocodile attacks her, makes love to her, and she conceives a lion with him. The next morning an acolyte of the temple interprets the dream to mean that Britomart and Artegall will marry and raise a great king.

A few historical examples pertaining to Nile crocodiles will further add to the meaning of the role the crocs play in literature. Following the death of Alexander the Great in Babylon in 323 BC on his way back from India, there was a power struggle between his two Macedonian generals, Ptolemy and Perdiccas. In a historical turn of events in 320 BC, the struggle was decisively concluded in favor of the former. About two thousand of the latter's troops perished, along with their horses and elephants, as they were wading through the strong current of the Egyptian Nile from its Eastern side in an attempt to invade Ptolemy's forces on the West. Unfortunately they were never to walk out of the river. They got trapped in the sudden rise of the Nile, half of them drowned and half to be devoured live by the hungry crocodiles, dreaded carnivores with their reptilian maws. "Perdiccas's luckless soldiers became a crocodilian repast."<sup>xxxiii</sup> Similar historical event would play out during the Third Crusade (1189-1192) when the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa's horse slipped causing him to drown in the swiftly flowing tide of the river in the mountains of Turkey and his 20-thousand cavalry soldiers to disperse in disarray.

The ferocity of the Nile crocodiles continued to resurface in political and cultural history. One such moment was during the early Roman times when the

triumvirate member Octavian Caesar had defeated the last (Ptolemite) monarch of Egypt Queen Cleopatra and adopted the title of Augustus as the new emperor of Rome. The cruel attraction for the kind of bloody gore that the Nile crocodiles were notorious for was part of the Roman public entertainment at the huge racecourse and gladiatorial combat field, the Circus Maximus. It was there that wild games and sports, including beast hunts, used to be arranged in order to satisfy the sadistic yet popular demand for the violent big game hunting. People used to watch the slaughter of men, lions, bears, elephants, hippopotamus and crocodiles. In one instance, the Circus was turned "into a swampy replica of an Egyptian landscape in which men hunted the uncaged beasts [...] and a toothy croc made lunch of a careless Roman."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Leo Africanus (1494-1555?), a widely traveled Muslim intellectual of Moorish origin, whose original name was Al-Hassan ibn Mohammad al-Wazzan al-Fassi and who was probably Shakespeare's model for Othello, survived North African Atlas mountain blizzards and Nile crocodile attacks, among other dangerous situations. In one of the parallels between Leo and Othello in terms of deadly accidents and narrow escapes they faced, Leo's English publisher and translator John Pory wrote in 1600, "How often was [Leo] in hazard to have been captured, or have had his throat cut by the prowling Arabs and wild Moors? And how hardly many times escaped he the lion's greedy mouth, and the devouring jaws of the crocodile?"<sup>xxxv</sup> But it was not until Napoleon Bonaparte's brief political and scientific occupation of the Nile Valley (1798-1801) that the Ottoman Egypt came into prominence in Europe and became a popular tourist destination for the Europeans. A trip up the Nile was a must-do thing

for wealthy travelers, who brought along with them a piece of sculpture or a sphinx as memorabilia. "A mummy in one hand and a crocodile in the other," was the way one French monk described returning travelers from Egypt from Napoleon's invasion.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Be it a killing crush of nature or its convivial and winking creative spirit, there is a vitally green Romantic tradition that is deeply ecocritical and ecosophical at its core. As in Keats, the charm and appeal of nature are never "dead" and "ceasing." Like Keats's grasshopper that is "never done/With his delights," green Romantic tradition never runs out of its eco-poetical content. Its organic complex is as endless as the grasshopper's voice that would either run "From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead" when all other birds are "faint with the hot sun,/And hide in cooling trees." Or, "when tired out with fun/He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed." Again, like the grasshopper that "takes the lead/In summer luxury," ecocriticism has taken the lead in the field of the critical study of literature that may be applied to the works of literature from the beginning (epics, lyrics, and elegies) to all that followed through the Renaissance and the Romantics. The modern British and American writers such as Hardy, Hopkins, Hughes, Larkin, Dylan Thomas, Emerson, Thoreau, Mary Hunter Austin, William Bartram, Wendell Berry, John Muir (also known as "John of the Mountains" and "Father of the National Parks"), conservationist and writer former US President Theodore Roosevelt, forester and conservationist former Pennsylvania governor Gifford Pinchot,<sup>xxxvii</sup> and also the Cherokee and the Apache are known for their nature writings with strong ecological impulse and sensitivity. German naturalist writer Alexander von Humboldt also may be mentioned here.

#### D. Birney and Macleod

One day my topic of discussion in a writing class in Canada was the narrative-descriptive style. Among the other examples were Orwell's vivid description of shooting an elephant in colonial Burma/Myanmar; Mark Twain's living description of his boyhood farmland with its host of big and small natural objects, both living and non-living; Margaret Atwood's "lovely and windless evening" passage from her *Alias Grace*; and an excellent student paragraph about a green field, all containing analogies, metaphors and oxymorons and suggesting the writers' power of observation. One of my "older" students was so happy and inspired by these literary pieces that she forwarded me the same evening a most beautiful poem (pretty long though), called "David" by Earle Birney (1904-1995).

"David"

(<https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/david>) is a poem of tragic death amid the countless minute and magnificent natural particulars--trees, plants, birds, animals, shrubs, vegetation, earth, air, sky, mists, mountain peaks, clouds, weather, valleys, lakes, fishes, the sun, the moon, mornings, afternoons, twilight, and evenings. It is set in the Canadian Rockies with the vast prospect of the prairies around. Just as an epic hero is described with a descriptive epithet each time he is mentioned in the long epic narrative, each aspect or object of nature in "David" is mentioned not only with wonderfully coined and sensuously appealing, but also ecologically suffused phrases and verbs.<sup>xxxviii</sup> I was delighted to read what I found to be an awesomely green poem, a discovery that was as great for me as Keats's discovery of the Homeric "wide expanse" was through Chapman's translation. "David," as just mentioned, is about the

title character's tragic fall to death while climbing to a mountain peak along with his surviving friend, the poet himself. On the one hand, it is a poem of eternally living nature in its sublime and beautiful aspects --described in abundant details; on the other, it is about a fellow mountaineering friend's slow death caused by his 50 ft. deep fall. Moment-by-moment description of the two friends' climbing of mountain after mountain until the tragic fall of one of them in the midst of vast natural surroundings is amazing.

"David" in its plethora of green details in their phenomenally pristine and prehistoric manifestations minus its tragic side is also strikingly similar to Fiona Macleod's (female pseudonym of the Scottish nature writer William Sharp) unusually environmentally-aware collection of nature writings called *Where the Forest Murmurs* (1906). In the collection, the New Year essay, "At the Turn of the Year," is one of its rare kind in which he considers nature constantly alive and active even in the so-called bleak winter as it is in other seasons. He does not consider December, January, and February to be dead or asleep: "the same drama of life and death is enacted in midwinter as in midspring or midsummer, a drama only less crowded, less complex and less obvious, but not less continual, not less vital for the actors." To the "quick eyes and careful ears" of Macleod, there is a multitude of winter birdlife in their ceaseless motion and activities, all described in the panoply of their colorful plumage and pinions, beaks and bills, shapes and sizes, and habits and habitats. Flocks of them are either local, or migrating, in the face of cold winter sleets and winds, and snows and frosts, from different directions—from the arctic pole to the Tundra. Their multiform are seen everywhere--by the coppice, forests, riversides,

stream-sides, seacoasts, field-thickets, fallow-lands, farmlands, grasslands, ploughed lands, woodlands, hedgerows, heaths, heights, glens and moors. By no means nature in winter is lifeless. There are winter plants, worms, insects, birds, and field-travellers, such as the "resident and immigrant" larks [...],

pee-wits seeking worms on ploughed lands at midwinter [...] while the greedy but incapable sea-mews, inland come from frost-bound coasts or on the front of prolonged gales [...] the dauntless bunting [...], wandering thrushes; the vagrant rooks, the barn-haunting hoodie; the yellow-hammer flocks and the tribes of the finch; the ample riverside life, where heron and snipe, mallard and moor-hen, wren and kingfisher, and even plover and the everywhere adaptable starling are to be found with ease by quick eyes and careful ears [...] the sudden apparition of the bat, or the columnar dance of the ephemeridae [mayflies], or the flight of the winter-moth along the disheveled hedgerows [...] the mistletoe and the ivy, the holly and the fir, the box and the late-flowering clematis, and many other of the *green and flowering clans* of the forest and the garden [...] the midwinter-blooming [wild flower called] shepherd's purse, healing groundsel, bright chickweed, and red deadnettle [...] the dun-hued lapwing [...] the inland-wandering gull [...] the most jubilant great-tit in the forest will ring his early tinkling bell under leafless boughs [...].<sup>xxxix</sup> (My emphasis for birds and flowers).

The closely observing Macleod says that after the spring and summer birds (cuckoos, swallows, landrails, and swans) are gone by November by the effect of "the wet winds of the *west* and the freezing blasts of the *north*," "ten thousand wings" as "the migrants from overseas descend at last on our English and Scottish shores," starting from the autumn. A "myriad host," swept away, is replaced by "an incalculable host" due to "those *east* winds

from Norway and the Baltic, from Jutland and Friesland, [...] those *south* winds leaping upward from the marshes of Picardy and the Breton heathlands and from all of the swarm-delivering South behind, [...] those *southwest* gales warm with the soft air of the isles of the west, and wet with the foam over lost Ys and sunken Lyonesse.” Macleod describes the nonstop life of nature by using “a homely way of saying that the old year has not lapsed before the New Year has already stirred with the divine throes of rebirth. ‘The King is dead: Long live the King!’ is the human analogue. There is no interregnum.”

E. Romantic Flowers: Shakespeare, Milton, Beckford, and Keats

So far in this essay there has run a thread of Romantic birds and animals, plants and trees, and lands and locales, but the Romantic flowers are equally important to suggest a keen consciousness about the ecological patterns marking the seasonal movement, each season having its own flowers. Apart from the naturalists, who know all the details about the flowers--color, shape, size, smell, and the geographical areas where they grow--, the environmental link between the poets and writers and their flowers is always fresh and fascinating. One cannot but love their flowers as one does their songs, both in their infinite qualities and quantities. Be it in the context of upper class social mobility or closeness to nature, one finds an opportunity to reaffirm one's ties to earth through flowers as in Spenser's columbine in his *April* eclogue, Blake's sunflower and sick rose (though both are unconventionally treated), Robert Burns' "My love is like a red, red rose," Jane Austen's geraniums in *Mansfield Park*, John Ruskin's botanical studies of leaves and gentians, and Bernard Shaw's flower girl Liza selling

flowers on a rainy day in *Pygmalion*. They (poets and writers) know their flowers not only to express their love, care, friendship, sympathy and goodwill but also to stay connected with “the great creating nature,” to borrow the phrase from Shakespeare, in a deeply conducive manner. “I know a bank where the wild Thyme blows,/Where Oxlips and the nodding Violet grows (Oberon says in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1, 249-250); or “Oxlips in their cradles growing” (*Two Noble Kinsmen*, Introductory song).

But Shakespeare's best flower scene occurs between Perdita and her would-be father-in-law King Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* (4.4) where the two characters' dialogue, there being a dearth of winter flowers, centers on crossbreeding or the mending art of nature. They discuss rosemary and rue that retain their scent and appearance all through the winter but not actually winter flowers; flowers of the middle summer—“Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;/The marigold, that goes to bed with the sun/And with him rises weeping;” flowers of autumn—“carnations and streak'd gillyvors,/ Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind/Our rustic garden's barren;” and the flowers of early spring—daffodils, violets, primroses, oxlips, lilies, and crown imperials. The third movement (lines 133–185) of Milton's pastoral elegy *Lycidas* begins with the “valleys low” being asked to throw their flowers on their “green turf” soaked in showers:

Return, Alpheus: [...], return,  
Sicilian Muse,

And call the vales and bid them  
hither cast

Their bells and flow'rets of a  
thousand hues [...]

And purple all the ground with  
vernal flowers.

Bring the rash **primrose** that  
forsaken dies,

The tufted **crow-toe**, and pale  
**jasmine**,

The white pink, and the **pansy**  
freak'd with jet,

The glowing **violet**,

The **musk-rose**, and the well-  
attired **woodbine**,

With **cowslips** wan that hang the  
pensive head,

And every flower that sad  
embroidery wears;

Bid **amaranth** all his beauty shed,

And **daffodils** fill their cups with  
tears,

To strew the laureate hearse where  
Lycid lies.

Milton's most beautiful floral moment is followed by the poem's emotional turn from grief to joy at the thought that the dead shepherd-poet is in heaven and that the mourner, in the brief epilogue (lines 186–193), can now look forward to a new day of hope. In its elegiac context, Milton's floral trope, as constructed as it seems to be, reminds one of Whitman's truly natural floral tribute When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd on the death (assassination) of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865.

Less than one third through Beckford's *Caliph Vathek*, the famous gothic novel about Vathek's damning excesses and transgressions, contains an unforgettable passage in the description of the heavenly spot that can only be conceived in terms of the earthly pastoral endowed with its own fruits and flowers and birds and rivers:

At the distance of a few miles from Samarah stood a high mountain, whose sides were swarded with **wild thyme and basil**, and its summit overspread with so delightful a plain, that it might be taken for the paradise destined for the faithful. Upon it grew **a hundred thickets of eglantine and other fragrant shrubs, a hundred arbors of roses, jasmine, and honeysuckle**, as many clumps of *orange trees, cedar, and citron, whose branches, interwoven with the palm, the pomegranate, and the vine*, presented every luxury that could regale the eye or the taste. The ground was strewed with **violets, hare-bells, and pansies**, in the midst of which sprang forth **tufts of jonquils, hyacinths, and carnations**, with every other perfume that impregnates the air. **Four fountains**, not less clear than deep, and so abundant as to slake the thirst of ten armies, seemed profusely placed here to make the scene more resemble the garden of Eden, which was watered **by the four sacred rivers**. Here the *nightingale* sang the **birth of the rose**, her well-beloved, and at the same time lamented its short-lived beauty; whilst the turtle deplored the loss of more substantial pleasures, and the *wakeful lark* hailed the rising light that re-animates the whole creation. Here more than anywhere the *mingled melodies of birds* expressed the various passions they inspired, as if the exquisite fruits which they pecked at pleasure had given them a double energy (my emphasis).

Beckford's earth-bound, yet constructed "locus amoenus" of heavenly landscape may be compared with other tropes of constructed nature: Edgar Allan Poe's telling of the afterlife in a place called *Al*

*Aaraaf* in the poem of the same name. The catalogue of flowers near the beginning of the poem that is based on the Quran (Chapter Seven) was inspired by Thomas Moore's *Lalla-Rookh*. One of his early poems (composed in 1829 when he was only 15 as he claimed), *Al Aaraaf* is, at 422 lines, Poe's longest and also his most complex and obscure poem.

Of the major Romantics, it was the eldest and the youngest, Wordsworth and Keats, who were most fond of flowers in their down-to-earth treatment of them in all their beauty and variety. In the sonnet, "To a friend who sent me some roses," Keats says that while he was rambling in the "happy fields," he "saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields" and that was "a fresh-blown musk-rose" that, in its fragrance and gracefulness, "far excell'd" the garden-rose:

But when, O Wells! thy roses came  
to me  
My sense with their deliciousness  
was spell'd:  
Soft voices had they, that with  
tender plea  
Whisper'd of peace, and truth, and  
friendliness unquell'd.

The most beautiful—incredibly beautiful—flower verses in the whole English literature belongs to Keats in his *Ode to a Nightingale*, which in turn is perhaps the most well-known bird poem ever written. Like *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Autumn*, the materiality of the local spot/place in the *Nightingale* Ode cannot be missed or ignored. He wrote the poem in 1819, while visiting his friend Charles Brown, who later wrote about the morning of its composition:

In the spring of 1819, a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast

table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale.<sup>x1</sup>

It is the memorable fifth stanza that in the emotional height of the poet's identification with the *Nightingale* in the wood keeps him gravitated toward the surrounding nature:

Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is  
on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her  
starry Fays;  
But here there is no  
light,  
Save what from heaven is with  
the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms  
and winding mossy ways.  
I cannot see what flowers are at my  
feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs  
upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess  
each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month  
endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-  
tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral  
eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd  
up in leaves;

And mid-May's eldest  
child,

The coming musk-rose, full of  
dewy wine,

The murmurous haunt of  
flies on summer eves.

Even in a state of spiritually upward flight, Keats remains oriented to the unspoiled and uncontaminated in nature through his visual, tactile, olfactory and auditory senses. It is a condition that would not have been possible without the cultivation of a poetic chord with the living physical environment. Keats establishes an Emersonian "original relation" with nature just as he creates his own stanza-form out of his indebtedness to the literary tradition of two sonnet forms.<sup>xli</sup> The originality of his touch with nature emanates from his being immersed and intimately close to the landscape of the poem: meadows, dim forest, streams, hillsides, valley glades, "melodious plot/Of beechen green and shadows numberless," "deep-delved earth, /Tasting of Flora and the country green, / Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!" However, it also exudes, by contrast, from the poet's knowledge of history and human society (Keats being the most social of the Romantic poets as shown throughout his poetry, including this poem's "The weariness, the fever, and the fret" and "No hungry generations tread thee down" stanzas). As Emerson says, "Nature will not be Buddhist; she resents generalizing, and insults the philosopher in every moment with a million of fresh particulars."<sup>xlii</sup> Keats experiences those "fresh particulars" of sights and sounds in contact with nature that he captures with a remarkable capacity for the immediate as well as the pure, pristine, and primordial in a form and style that even an avowed ecologist or a naturalist would find highly satisfying.

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<sup>i</sup> From the ancient mythological and prehistorical caves in many countries to Plato's allegory of the cave to Prophet Mohammad's Cave of Mount Hira (Jabal al-Noor) to the Biblical and Quranic Seven Sleepers' Cave to Shakespeare's Caliban's cave to Coleridge's caves and caverns in *Kubla Khan* to Shelley's Cave of Poesy in *Mont Blanc*; Cave of Prometheus and Cave of Demogorgon in *Prometheus Unbound*. There is an idealized portrait of ancient Roman emperor Augustus (Octavian Caesar) in which his head is shown covered with wreaths of oak leaves. In Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* which is about the wonders of 1666--naval encounters, the great fire and other historical facts, the Admiral is compared to an old oak. Cowper's "Yearley Oak" is a majestic unfinished moral poem. In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth compares Burke to an Oak. As mentioned below, there are ancient Druid oak groves, 'mighty oaks' in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and a large oak in Coleridge's *Christabel*.

<sup>ii</sup> The other book by Bate is *The Song of the Earth* (Cambridge, Mass: HUP, 2000), in which he seeks to elucidate the history of environmental consciousness from the imaginative experience of poetry.

<sup>iii</sup> For the relevance of "Michael" to "the great national events that are daily taking place," see W. Thomas Pepper, "The Ideology of Wordsworth's 'Michael: A Pastoral Poem,'" *Criticism*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (fall, 1989), pp. 367-382.

<sup>iv</sup> [https://medium.com/@Nick\\_DeMott/a-brief-history-of-ecocriticism-a120614d30fc](https://medium.com/@Nick_DeMott/a-brief-history-of-ecocriticism-a120614d30fc)

<sup>v</sup> It was first anonymously published, in a shorter form, in 1810 as Introduction to Wilkinson's drawings. In 1820, it was revised and published in the *River Duddon* volume under his own name. Two years later it was published separately, then in 1823, and finally as *Guide to the Lakes* in 1835. See Owen and Smyser, ed. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Vol. III, pp. 210, 220.

<sup>vi</sup> Nicholas Roe, "John Keats's 'Green World': Politics, Nature and the Poems," in A. Christensen, et al., ed. *The Challenge of Keats: Bicentenary Essays 1795-1995* (DQR Studies in Literature: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 61-77 (17).

<sup>vii</sup> A few other Romantic urns are: in Beckford's *Vathek*, mother Carathis drawing a parchment from a filigree urn; in *Childe Harold* (3, 76), Byron, referring to Rousseau, says, "Those who find contemplation in the urn/To look on One, whose dust was once all fire;" in *Manfred* (3.4): "The dead, but sceptered sovereigns, who still rule/Our spirits from



their urns.” The chorus in Shelley’s *Hellas*: “drain not to its dregs the urn/of bitter prophecy.” There is a “fluttering urn” in Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (95), meaning an urn to boil water for tea or coffee, heated by a fluttering flame.

viii A few other literary jars are: Sindbad, “The jar that drops a second time is sure to break”; Wallace Stevens’ “Anecdote of a jar” and Jon Stallworthy’s “Sindhi Woman: she glides with a stone jar.”

ix See A J Koutsoukis, *Ancient Greece* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1989), p. 51.

x Tim Chamberlain about Keats’s Grecian Urn, [www.academia.edu/1532559/The\\_Elusive\\_Urn\\_The\\_British\\_Museum\\_Magazine\\_](http://www.academia.edu/1532559/The_Elusive_Urn_The_British_Museum_Magazine_)

xi Nancy Jenkins, “A Trove in Turin,” *Saudi Aramco World*, 29.1, Jan/Feb 1978, pp. 28-32. [archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197801/a.trove.in.tur.in.htm](http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197801/a.trove.in.tur.in.htm). Also see, *Saudi Aramco World*, May-June, 1977 (available online).

xii Bate, “Keats: Ode to Autumn as Ecosystem,” in Laurence Coupe, ed. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (Routledge, 2000).

xiii <https://www.shmoop.com/to-autumn/>

xiv Ecocriticism and Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud": [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyYyPu98xBo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyYyPu98xBo), as opposed to a Marxist interpretation of the poem, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnVAPhHvWek](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnVAPhHvWek).

xv Nicholas Roe (ed.), *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, OUP, 1995, p. 208. In respect of ancient Mediterranean deforestation, McKusick acknowledges Clive Pointing’s *A Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), pp. 68-78. See the book by James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*, 2000.

xvi Chandler and McDonald, “Before the Mummies: The Desert Origins of the Pharaohs” and “Desertification and Civilization,” *Saudi Aramco World*, Sept/Oct 2006, 57:5, pp. 2- 11, and Nov/Dec 2007, 58:6, pp. 36-43 respectively (all SAW issues are available online). The authors duly acknowledge the contribution of other scholarly sources such as Harry Thurston’s *Island of the Blessed: The Secrets of Egypt’s Everlasting Oasis* (2003) and *Secrets of the Sands: The Revelations of Egypt’s Everlasting Oasis* (2004), Brian Fagan’s *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization* (2004), Arlene Miller Rosen’s *Civilizing Climate: Social Responses to*

*Climate Change in the Ancient Near East* (2007) and William Burroughs’ *Climate Change in Prehistory: The End of the Reign of Chaos* (2005).

xvii Harrigan and Doughty, “New Pieces of Mada’in Salih’s Puzzle,” *Saudi Aramco World*, July/August 2007, 58:4, pp. 14-23. Rejection of Prophet Salih by the people of Thamud is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an more than once.

xviii Warren U. Ober, “‘Mohammad’: The Outline of a Proposed Poem by Coleridge and Southey,” *Notes and Queries*, 203 (Jan-Dec 1958), p. 448. Thanks to Alicia Black of N & Q, who, upon request, made available the less-than-a-page note from the electronic sources at Bodleian Library, Oxford. See my “Personal, Political, Scientific, and Oriental: Contextualizing Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* the New Historicist Way in my *Perspectives: Romantic, Victorian, and Modern Literature*, pp. 116-117; and *Readings in Oriental Literature: Arabian, Indian, and Islamic*, pp. 159-160.

xix Sebastian Prange, “Thomas Jefferson’s Al-Koran,” *Saudi Aramco World*, July/August 2011 (available online). When he was a Law student, Jefferson purchased the 2nd ed. of Sale’s translation done in 1764. Both Sale and Jefferson were lawyers and seem to have been influenced by Quranic jurisprudence. Though not free from some of the prejudices of the past, Sale’s translation is considered to be better than the two earlier English translations, one by Alexander Ross (that was based on Du Ryer’s 1647 French translation) and the other by William Bedwell (d. 1632).

xx This influence is discussed in the article “Coleridge’s Orientalist View of Mahomet”: <http://puslit2.petra.ac.id/ejournal/index.php/ing/article/viewFile/18208/18084>

xxi There are scores of similar verses describing the beauty of the paradise throughout the Quran. Please see the English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *The Holy Qur’an* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, reprinted 2008, first p. 1934, 2001).

xxii See Abdullah Yusuf Ali, tr., *The Holy Qur’an*, Verses 7.130, 7.133, 13.3-4, 15.19, 16.15, 16.65-69, 17.90-91, 18.47, 21.31, 22.18, 27.60-61, 31.10, 31.29, 31-31-3234.16, 35.27, 41.10, 50.7, 50.9-10, 55.5-13, 77.27, 78.6-7. And 79.3-33.

xxiii His *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (1994) is among his other notable publications.

xxiv Hunt’s titles for his sonnets on the corresponding subjects are “To the Grasshopper and the Cricket,”

“On a Lock of Milton’s Hair,” and “The Nile,” the last, according to Perkins, being far superior to those by Keats and Shelley, on which Hunt worked for several hours. See Perkins, *English Romantic Writers*, 786.

<sup>xxv</sup> David Fairer, “The Sonnet,” in Roe, *An Oxford Guide to Romanticism*, 307–08.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Editorial review of Leonard Lutwack, *Birds in Literature*, University Press of Florida, 1994.

<sup>xxvii</sup> In contrast with the nightingale, a small low-flying singing bird, which is more common in nature and closer to earth, associated with softer and more homely qualities, the larger and high-flying eagle is associated with divinity, military, royalty, nationality, strength, and far-sighted vision. It appears in ancient mythology, Dante, Chaucer, Donne, Beckford, Blake, Byron, Napoleon, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Whitman, Melville, Poe, Joyce, and Yeats, among others.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Richard Mabey, “May, Month of Nightingales,” *Reader’s Digest*, May 1997, p. 67.

<sup>xxix</sup> [http://www.asle.org/wp-content/uploads/ASLE\\_Primer\\_DefiningEcocrit.pdf](http://www.asle.org/wp-content/uploads/ASLE_Primer_DefiningEcocrit.pdf)

<sup>xxx</sup> Examples include: (1) Twelfth century “The Owl and the Nightingale” (anonymous);

(2) Thirteenth century “The Thrush and the Nightingale” (anonymous) and the two Philomena poems, one by John Pecham and the other by John of Howden;

(3) Late fourteenth century “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” by John Clanvowe;

(4) Early fifteenth century “The Flower and the Leaf” (anonymous);

(5) Two fifteenth century nightingale poems attributed to John Lydgate;

(6) Philip Sidney’s “The Nightingale” (1581);

(7) Richard Crashaw’s “Music’s Duel” (involving a lute-player and a nightingale);

(8) Charlotte Smith’s three elegiac sonnets—“To a Nightingale,” “On the Departure of the Nightingale” (1784), and “The Return of the Nightingale” (1791);

(9) Wordsworth’s “The Nightingale” and “O Nightingale! thou surely art”;

(10) Coleridge’s “To the Nightingale” (1796) and “The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem” (1798);

(11) John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”;

(12) Matthew Arnold’s “Philomela” (in which she sings a sad song of eternal pain and passion);

(13) Swinburne’s “Itylus” (1864), being about how the nightingale defends its long-lasting misery and unhappiness against the happy song of the swallow; and

(14) Robert Bridges’ “Nightingales.”

It is to be noted that the owl and the snake and the olive tree were closely identified with Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom, while doves and sparrows accompanied Aphrodite, goddess of love. The cow, cuckoo, and peacock were sacred to Hera, who, as the wife of the chief god Zeus, was queen of heaven and goddess of marriage and the life of women. Golden snakes entwined the winged wand of Hermes, son of Zeus and messenger of the gods. The laurel was sacred to Apollo, who as the god of the sun, was the most majestic of the gods, with interests in archery, music, medicine and prophecy.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Jeni Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales: Gender, Class, Histories* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Duncan Wu, *Immortal Bird: The Nightingale in Romantic Poetry* (Rome: Keats-Shelley House, 2011); Leonard Lutwack, *Birds in Literature* (1994).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> [www.haaretz.com/life/world-s-oldest-crocodile-turns-114-1.5350229](http://www.haaretz.com/life/world-s-oldest-crocodile-turns-114-1.5350229);

[www.news24.com/Green/News/Oldest-known-crocodile-turns-114-in-KZN-20141215](http://www.news24.com/Green/News/Oldest-known-crocodile-turns-114-in-KZN-20141215).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> See Frank L Holt, “Ptolemy’s Alexandrian Postscript,” *Saudi Aramco World*, 57.6, Nov/Dec 2006, pp. 4-9.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See Frank L. Holt, “I, Obelisk,” *Saudi Aramco World*, 58.5, Sept/Oct 2007, p. 29.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Tom Verde, “A Man of Two Worlds,” *Saudi Aramco World*, 59.1, Jan/Feb 2008, p. 2-9. [archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200801/a.man.of.two.worlds.htm](http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200801/a.man.of.two.worlds.htm)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Nancy Jenkins, “A Trove in Turin,” *Saudi Aramco World*, 29.1, Jan/Feb 1978, pp. 28-32. [archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197801/a.trove.in.tur.in.htm](http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197801/a.trove.in.tur.in.htm)

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Quotes from Pinchot: “Conservation means the wise use of the earth and its resources for the lasting good of men.” “The vast possibilities of our great future will become realities only if we make ourselves responsible for that future.” “Unless we practice conservation, those who come after us will have to pay the price of misery, degradation, and failure for the progress and prosperity of our day.”

<sup>xxxviii</sup> For a few examples in only the first part of the poem, “long green surf of juniper flowing,” “darkening firs,” “fern-hidden cliffs,” “the cold/Pines thrust at the stars,” “The dawn was a floating/ Of mists till we reached to the slopes above timber,” “The peak was upthrust/Like a fist in a frozen ocean of rock that swirled/Into valleys the moon could be rolled in,” “Remotely unfurling/Eastward the alien prairie glittered,” “scroll of coral in limestone/And the beetle-seal in the shale of ghostly trilobites/

Letters delivered to man from the Cambrian waves,”  
 “a robin gyrating/In grass, wing-broken. I caught it to  
 tame but David/Took and killed it, and said, ‘Could  
 you teach it to fly?’” “By the forks of the Spray we  
 caught five trout and fried them/Over a balsam fire,”  
 “The woods were alive/ With the vaulting of mule-  
 deer and drenched with clouds all the morning,  
 cold/Breath of the glacier, surging bloom/Of  
 incredible dawn in the Rockies,” “curling lake,”  
 “bottle-green lake,” “the hurrying slant of the  
 sunset,” “air that was steeped/In the wail of  
 mosquitoes,” “splayed white ribs/Of a mountain  
 goat,” “silken feathers of kites,” and “Picking sunhot  
 raspberries.”

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<https://archive.org/details/whereforestmurm00maclrich/page/56-65>;

[https://archive.org/stream/atturnofyearessa00shar/atturnofyearessa00shar\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/atturnofyearessa00shar/atturnofyearessa00shar_djvu.txt), pp. 22-31.

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<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs/6/nighting.html>; [www.shmoop.com/ode-nightingale/](http://www.shmoop.com/ode-nightingale/)

<sup>xlii</sup> Gittings thinks that it is a Shakespearean quatrain followed by a Miltonic sestet. See Robert Gittings, *John Keats* (Penguin, 1985), p. 454. Watson who gives a detailed picture of Keats's adaptation of the form thinks that it is a variation of the Shakespearean and the Petrarchan patterns combined. See J.R. Watson, *English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), p.362.

<sup>xliii</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nominalist and Realist," *Essays and Journals*, ed. Lewis Mumford (Nelson Doubleday, 1968), p. 357.