

Byron and Ecocriticism

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smil'd,
And still his honied wealth Hymettus yields;
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain-air;
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

—Lord Byron, George Gordon, 2000, *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*, II, 819–827

The beautiful but barren Hymettus—the whole Coast of Attica—her hills & mountains—[...] are in themselves poetical—and would be so if the name of Athens—of Athenians—and her very ruins were swept from the earth. —But am I to be told that the “Nature” of Attica would be more poetical without the “Art” of the Acropolis? Of the Temple of Theseus? & of the still all Greek and glorious monuments of her exquisitely artificial Genius? [...] But is it the “Art”—the Columns—the temples—the wrecked vessel—which give them their antique and their modern poetry—and not the spots themselves [...]—the ruins are as poetical in Piccadilly as they were in the Parthenon—but the Parthenon and its rock are less without them. —Such is the Poetry of Art.—Lord Byron, George Gordon, 1991, *Letter to John Murray*, 133

In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
 And silent rows the songless gondolier;
 Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
 And music meets not always now the ear:
 Those days are gone—but Beauty still is here.
 States fall, arts fade—but Nature doth not die,
 Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
 The pleasant place of all festivity,
 The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy!

—Lord Byron, George Gordon, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV. 19–27

There can be nothing more poetical in its aspect than the City of Venice—does this depend upon the Sea or the canals? [...] Mr. B. will say perhaps—that the Rialto is but marble—the palaces & Churches only stone—and the Gondolas a “coarse” black Cloth—thrown over some planks of carved wood—with a shining bit of fantastically formed iron at the prow—“without” the water.—And I tell him that without these—the Water would be nothing but a clay coloured ditch [...] There would be nothing to make the Canal of Venice more poetical than that of Paddington—were it not for the artificial adjuncts above mentioned—although it is a perfectly natural canal—formed by the Sea—and the innumerable islands which constitute the site of this extraordinary city.—Lord Byron, George Gordon, 1991, *Letter to John Murray*, 134

Byron's poetics offer a surprisingly rich ecological vision of interconnect-edness. The passages from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* represent aspects of culture—freedom, beauty, music, art, nation-states, festivals—evolving from their specific natural settings in mutualistic, co-creative processes. The process is necessarily mutual and co-creative because, as Byron witnessed, cultural collapse takes the form of devolution whereby both nature and culture lose functionality as diversified richness on both sides diminishes. He sees remnants of past greatness in the climate, the bee, and architectural ruins, but senses the loss of intricate, productive synergies between geo-physical place, climate, nonhuman inhabitants, and human culture.

These once complex, fully integrated nature–culture systems made Venice “the pleasant place of all festivity” and Athens the aesthetic expression of the sweet grove, verdant hills, and “freeborn wanderer of th[e] mountain air.” Now they are fragmented. In other passages of the

poem, Byron castigates the hubris of human actors for breaking these fragile, co-creative networks, or failing to recognize the need to rebuild nature–culture collaboration.

His dirge for Venice and Athens in their years of devolution conjure the potential in the remnants, the self-reproducing synergies that could be released if diversified, spontaneous relationships developed as of old. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* inspires a recognition that a living place in its most robust, creative, and thriving form evolves from reciprocal relationships uniting nature and culture.

This theory, which we today would identify as a bioregionalist cultural ecology, is inseparable from Byron's aesthetics, as is evident from parallel citations from Byron's "Letter to John Murray." Byron's letter, long recognized as his most important statement on poetics, challenges William Lisle Bowles' polemic "that 'all images drawn from what is beautiful or sublime in the works of NATURE, are more beautiful and sublime than any images drawn from ART;' and that they are therefore, per se, more poetical" (quoted in Byron 1991, 400–401).¹

Timothy Morton later termed this theory "ecomimesis" and identified it as the characteristic of Romantic poetry (Morton 2007, 29–35).² While Wordsworth, in the "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," justified ecomimesis as the means to reform a sterile, affected poetics, Bowles defends ecomimesis as an end in itself, defying not just logic (we must suspend disbelief that cultural productions [art] provide unmediated access to "pure" nature), but also diminishing the value of co-creative nature–culture interaction. Bowles makes the fundamental mistake of assuming that inanimate nature alone can be art: any trace of humanity corrupts nature's beauty.

While Byron's letter directly targets Bowles' dogmatic version of Romantic ecomimesis, he also names "the Lakers—who whine about Nature because they live in Cumberland—and their under-Sect—(which someone has maliciously called the 'Cockney School')—who are enthusiastic for the country because they live in London" (Byron 1991, 156). Both "sects" practice ecomimesis and promote a return to small-scale, rural dwelling as the antidote to modernity, symbolized by London's urban sophistication and exploitive consumption.

As Byron points out, this Romantic attempt to parse art into two classes, "natural" and "artificial," is based on the epistemology of nature that undergirds "the predilections of a particular age; and every age has its own and a different one from its predecessor.... Schlegel and Madame de Stael

have endeavoured also to reduce poetry to *two* systems, classical and romantic. The effect is only beginning” (Byron 1991, 142). Aligning Romanticism with ecomimesis introduces a tendency in Romantic aesthetics to view nature and culture as binary opposites, reversing a previous neoclassical aesthetic that viewed nature as an antagonist to be overcome by science, reason and culture.³

In contrast to both extremes, Byron argues that built environments draw from and enhance the beauty of the natural environment, and the whole can be seen as a set of nested, linked scales that function in the same way asynchronously. He counters Bowles’ “images of pure nature” with “the ‘poetry’ of the situation”: art that calls attention to itself as a co-creative fusion of natural place and human observer. For Byron, the highest art exposes an intensive collaboration of nature and culture from which new artistic expression emerges and to which it contributes by adding another interconnected node to the network of nature–culture relations. The works of culture “are a direct manifestation of the mind, and presuppose poetry in their very conception; and have, moreover, as being such, a something of actual life which cannot belong to any part of inanimate nature” (Byron 1991, 134).

“Such a something of actual life” is the co-dependent obverse of “Nature that doth not die,” the creative force that sustains Venice as a place of beauty and vitality. “Venice” is the semi-autonomous human scale evolving out of the especially rich interlayering of natural scales, from the square-centimeter anaerobic scale to the geophysical and climactic scale, evidenced by the fact that signature characteristics of “Venice” depend on a nurturing, metabolic flow from the environment: Tasso could not write and the gondoliers could not sing if Venice were not dear to the environment out of which it emerged. Together, mutually beneficial co-creative processes between humans and the natural setting made Venice “the pleasant place of all festivity.” For Byron, art, while on a different scale, is necessarily a continuation of the metabolic processes of nature–culture collaboration and a reflection of them.

Byron’s aesthetic has its legacy in twentieth- and twenty-first-century theories of social, cultural and political ecology. Beauty is an expression of the energy of the place, which can be measured as the adaptive capacity built up over millennia by the layering of diverse, multiscale networks linking organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman. Microbiologists describe the development of these networks as “interspecies epigenesis” to denote the way “nothing makes itself in the biological world, but rather

reciprocal induction within and between always-in-process critters ramifies through space and time on both large and small scales in cascades of inter- and intra-action” (Haraway 2008, 32).

What is true in the biological world is also true in the cultural world. The flow of creative energy between interconnected things, as Byron makes evident in his descriptions of Athens and Venice, makes these assemblages beautiful. In their glory days, Venice and Athens manifested an extraordinary number of robust, diversified linkages between nature and culture, but as those relationships atrophied, the cultures declined and the quality and quantity of artistic expression faltered. And so their built environments devolved back into the earth. However, the creative energy that once flowered as “Athens” and “Venice” still exists. It has simply ebbed back into the bees, the wild crags, the sea, the sun and the soil from whence it came. For Byron, the persistence of inter- and intra-species “reciprocal induction” in ecosystems means that cultural epigenesis is possible.

Such a possibility is important for Byron as he surveys post-Napoleonic Europe, Asia Minor, and North America, which are threatened by new, global forms of economic and political tyranny, authorized by what he called the “canting” discourses of Romantic ecomimesis, philosophical idealism, and political economy. These new artistic, intellectual, and political forms are corrupting, in Byron’s opinion, because they contribute to the disaggregation of culture and nature. They impose a hierarchical logic that divides creation into an immutable order, establishing boundaries between things that restrict free, spontaneous associations, the unexpected alliances that lead to diversity and hybridity in ecosystems and creativity in human organizations.

Byron’s own “art of apposition,” as Jerome Christenson has put it, expresses the same ecosystem values for spontaneity, freedom of association, egalitarianism, hybridity, and diversification (1993, xviii). When he looks at landscapes, he is most interested in the surprising, radical, spontaneous creativity that emerges in those boundary regions that ecologists term “ecotones,” contact zones between distinct ecosystems, most clearly seen in those enormously fecund regions of tide pool and salt marsh where ocean meets land, such as Venice, but also evident in the complex geomorphology where savannah meets mountain characteristic of Athens.⁴ These are places of intense conflict, competition, opportunism, synergy, reciprocity and other forms of interaction—a radically different notion of nature than the nurturing organicism of most other Romantic nature poetry.

This analogy between the ecotone and Byron's poetry illustrates his interest in cultural and natural contact zones, where edge effects of juxtaposition and apposition generate spontaneity, freedom, surprise, and novelty in the creative process of reproduction. Not only are these edges and niches where the richest diversity of life is found, they are also the places that are least governable or susceptible to hierarchies of order. Thus, ecotones offer a natural analogue to the concept of political, social, and artistic freedom that Byron idealized as the fundamental element in a thriving culture. The unconstrained, random intersections of nature and culture in an ecotone such as Athens or Venice produce unanticipated hybrid concepts such as human freedom and democracy, egalitarian hedonism, Tasso's poetry, and the Parthenon friezes.

Byron's major poetry exemplifies what I call ecotone poetics, exploring what a sustainable interrelation of nature and culture looks like, while also experimenting with a form that performs like an ecotone. As he matures, his poetry grows more and more to resemble the ecotonal theory of nature that he represents. In the following chapters, I will describe the way that formal practice and thematic vision develops from his 1809 Grand Tour of the Mediterranean to his final cantos of *Don Juan*. Those early encounters with an ancient world of interlayered nature-culture inspired a vision of the dynamic interconnectedness of living and nonliving beings. This vision is the basis for his ecological understanding of how the environment and human society are adapted to each other, particularly how urban places are products of their environment that also influence the shape of that environment.

As it developed after his 1816 exile, Byron's theory of cultural ecology informed his claim to cosmopolitan identity, which he used as a platform to critique the post-Waterloo consolidation of state and capitalist power. Exploring Byron's ecological thought will significantly expand current definitions of British Romantic ecology, enabling us to see the development of ecological thinking as a widespread and diverse response to the environmental destruction wrought by the forces, ideas, and institutions of modernity.

A full accounting of Byron's cultural ecology and practice of ecotone poetics will also reveal the way the basic rhetoric deployed in the Bowles-Pope controversy has played out through the twentieth century's Romantic canon debates, including the way early ecocritics fashioned their movement in opposition to New Historicism. Central to the canon debate is the critical consensus that Byron and Wordsworth represent a binary

opposition, particularly on the subject of nature, a condition for which, as Anthony Howe has pointed out, Byron himself is partly responsible (2013, 1–3). Ironically, by attempting to articulate an integrated nature–culture aesthetic, Byron ended up on the losing side of what James Chandler has referred to as “*the* canonical controversy in English literary history” (1984, 481). While Byron knew that the Romantic “art of nature” was largely rhetorical, he did not anticipate the way “Byron” would eventually substitute for “Pope” as the opposite of Romantic nature poetics, exemplified by “Wordsworth.”

That process of transforming “Byron” into Romantic nature’s opposite started during the Romantic period and ran through the Victorian era and into the twentieth century, where it concludes with Jonathan Bate’s polemical engagement with Jerome McGann over the meaning of Romantic nature. This line runs through Ernest J. Lovell’s influential (1949) *Byron: The Record of a Quest*, the first monograph on Byron’s theory of nature. Lovell concluded that Byron was essentially an urban cosmopolitan who admired nature from a distance, and, lacking a philosophy of nature, was the only canonical Romantic capable of critiquing Romantic nature (47, 67–86).

Between 1949 and now, Bernard Blackstone is the only other critic to make a serious claim for Byron’s nature philosophy, arguing that “Byron’s synthetic vision conflates the human and the natural vulnerabilities. He is pretty nearly the first ‘conservationist’ among our poets, conscious of the extreme fragility of the man–nature symbiosis” (1975, 7).⁵ While Karl Kroeber, Christine Kenyon-Jones, Jonathan Bate, Mark Lussier, Colin Carman and Timothy Morton have contributed important pieces to an overall picture of Byron’s nature, the general consensus stands: that Byron is a social poet, not a nature poet.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will investigate three reasons for this: first, critical debates within British Romanticism, out of which the main trunk of Romantic ecocriticism emerged; second, Martin Heidegger’s influence on British Romantic ecocriticism; and third, ecocriticism’s dominant way of framing the study of place and belonging such that a cosmopolitan itinerant poet such as Byron is excluded. This will set up my analysis of Byron’s ecological thinking, which emerged from his alternative praxis of “ecstatic-dwelling.” That praxis grounds Byron’s ecological critique of cultural development and claim to eco-cosmopolitanism.

2.1 REPEATING HISTORY

New practices of cultural geography will discover in Romanticism a foundational struggle over the meaning of place, in that Wordsworth's claims to have experienced the transcendent and universal amidst the scenes of local Cumbria are passionately contested by a counter-vision of cosmopolitan experience, developed by Lord Byron. —Steven Cheeke, 2003, 9

I am still the youngest of the fifteen hundred first of living poets—as Wm Turdsworth is the oldest. —Lord Byron, *George Gordon*, 1973, Vol. 8, 168

As Steven Cheeke has explained, Byron and Wordsworth offer two radically different claims for how humans relate to more-than-human beings and environments; their oppositional discourses are foundational for opposing definitions of Romanticism. To generalize these differences: Wordsworth wrote passionately about his encounters with more-than-human beings and landscapes in European, mostly British, rural or wilderness areas, using a tone of sincerity in the epic style of blank verse or the reflective and personal lyric. He adopted the homely, intimate, domestic relation with nature and idealized small-scale community in retirement from the busy world. Byron wrote extensively about social and cultural encounters in European or Near Eastern, often urban areas, frequently using an ironic tone in satiric forms derived from Renaissance and neo-classical traditions. He adopted a cosmopolitan relation to Eurasian elite culture and actively participated in transnational political affairs, dying in Greece in service to a pan-European philhellenism. These differences were first emphasized by Wordsworth and Byron themselves, who damned each other publicly (and entertainingly) to authorize their opposing claims to dominance in the Romantic period (Cheeke 2003, 8–9). Their opposition provided a structuring rhetoric for the emergence of Romanticism.

The opposition between “Wordsworth” and “Byron” continued to be useful during the twentieth century's debate over Romantic periodization and the canon, where the rhetoric of Romanticism provided a useful foil for contemporary anxieties about the marginalization of academic literary discourse and leftist intellectual concerns. Starting in the 1980s, New Historicism fashioned itself as a deconstruction of Wordsworth's Romantic ideology of natural supernaturalism by championing Byron's sceptical historicity; at the same time, right-wing ideologues were discrediting

academic humanists for their ideological scepticism in the Anglo-American culture wars.⁶

One decade later, ecocriticism had fashioned itself as a defence of Wordsworth's turn to nature by rejecting Byronic scepticism, while at the same time, an ascendant neoliberal ideology marginalized environmental concerns.⁷ In both cases, contemporary academic concerns about post-Reagan / Thatcher neoliberal cultural formations found a displaced analogue in Romantic debates about nature. Just as New Historicism established itself in opposition to M. H. Abrams by redeploing the opposition between Wordsworth and Byron, so also ecocriticism established itself in opposition to New Historicism by reversing that opposition. Thus, Romanticism's foundational opposition between Wordsworth and Byron, which repeated the oppositions laid out in "The Pope Controversy" (which, as James Chandler has reminded us, repeated the Joseph Warton–Samuel Johnson debate opposing Milton and Pope), was repeated in the critical debates about the Romantic canon in the twentieth century.

The positions mapped out by the early nineteenth-century canon controversies continue to operate as placeholders for subsequent critics' self-fashioning rhetorics, which in turn shape our understanding of both Wordsworth and Byron, and Romanticism generally. If we want answers for why early ecocriticism largely allowed the stereotypes of Byron-the-social-critic and Wordsworth-the-nature-poet to stand, then its indebtedness to the rhetoric of Romanticism, invented by Wordsworth and Byron themselves, is the place to look. Hiding behind this rhetoric, then as now, is an epistemological debate about the nature of nature.⁸

The debate, starting with Wordsworth and Byron themselves, but extending, as I have shown, across Romantic aesthetics, revolves around how seriously to take Wordsworth's idea of nature. In 1971, M. H. Abrams proposed to take Wordsworth's nature seriously, challenging Geoffrey Hartman's theory that Wordsworth used nature as a vehicle for cultivating imaginative transcendence and autonomy. Abrams legitimized the Romantic turn to nature as "the secularization of inherited theological ideas" in response to the millenarian promise and failure of the French Revolution. The poets of the Romantic period:

represented themselves in the traditional persona of the philosopher-seer or the poet-prophet...and they set out, in various yet recognizably parallel ways,

to reconstitute the grounds of hope and to announce the certainty, or at least the possibility, of a rebirth in which a renewed mankind will inhabit a renovated earth where he will find himself thoroughly at home. (Abrams 1971, 12)

For Abrams, William Wordsworth defined the spirit of his age and his “Prospectus” to the Recluse “stands as the manifesto of a central Romantic enterprise against which we can conveniently measure the consonance and divergences in the writings of his contemporaries” (1971, 14). That enterprise is to “sing in solitude the spousal verse / Of this great consummation” between the external world and the mind (“Home at Grasmere” 1003–1011).

As is well known, Abrams built a Romantic canon around Wordsworth’s “Prospectus,” excluding Byron “because in his greatest work he speaks with an ironic counter-voice and deliberately opens a satirical perspective on the vatic stance of his Romantic contemporaries” (1971, 13). Abrams’ argument for taking Wordsworthian sincerity seriously and excommunicating the “Satanic” Byron is a Wordsworthian argument. Likewise, Hartman’s critique of Wordsworth’s “penchant for resounding sublimities...hiding logical evasions behind vague phrasing and lax syntax,” is a prose version of Byron’s sneer at Wordsworth’s “drowsy frowzy poem, call’d the ‘Excursion’” (*Don Juan* III, 848).⁹ *Natural Supernaturalism* defends Wordsworth in a Wordsworthian way, while Hartman retools Byron’s narrative of Wordsworth’s apostasy to critique Wordsworth.

When Jerome McGann developed the New Historicist method in Romantic studies, according to Jerome Christenson, he enlisted Byron as an “ally in his New Historical project to expose the hypocrisy and false consciousness in Romanticism” (1993, xiv). By taking Wordsworth’s nature seriously, McGann has argued, Abrams reified Wordsworth’s ideological escape from history, which McGann exposed Byronically by contextualizing the turn to nature.¹⁰

Stephen Cheeke has characterized the situation as mutual attraction: Byron had a grand passion for history, and New Historicism used his “historical rationalism” to stand for historical study in opposition to Wordsworth’s transcendental imagination and escape from history into nature (2003, 10). Behind this debate, an unspoken disagreement about the epistemology of nature played out. For Abrams, Wordsworth’s visionary Nature is a transcendental truth that a blind Byron can only scoff at; for McGann, Byron perceives that Wordsworth’s nature, like all “nature” claims, is a socially constructed idea.

James Chandler's *England in 1819* shows how New Historicism repeats the historiography of Romanticism by demonstrating that the most important New Historicist works on Byron, McGann's 1976 *Don Juan in Context* and Jerome Christenson's 1993 *Lord Byron's Strength*, are apologies for Byron in a Byronic mode: *Don Juan's* moral casuistry is a model for New Historicism's historical materialism (Chandler 1998, 357–381).

As Orrin Wang subsequently argued, the intimacy between New Historicism's object of study and critical methodology is visible in the way New Historicists theorized Romanticism as an ideological turn, not to nature, but to commodification and consumption, and took Byron as a role model because he turned commodification and consumption into literary tropes (2011, 6, 199–200).¹¹

Wang's schema suggested that Romanticism and its critical schools organize themselves around similar sets of binaries, with Byron authorizing cultural studies and historical materialism while Wordsworth authorizes the high theory of Hegelian dialectics and Heideggerian ecocriticism. Romantic New Historicism founded itself by continuing to use the polarizing rhetoric that Byron himself was partly responsible for fashioning when he aligned his work with the realities of human history and capitalist relations, while demonizing "Wm Turdsworth's" work as a desire to escape that social mesh into a fantasy world of nature.

In the 1990s, British Romantic Ecocriticism emerged in direct competition with McGann's New Historicism and justified itself by aligning with Wordsworth's politics of nature instead of Byron's.¹² Five of the foundational works of British Romantic ecocriticism—Jonathan Bate's 1991 *Romantic Ecology*, Nicholas Roe's 1992 *Politics of Nature*, Karl Kroeber's 1994 *Ecological Literary Criticism*, Bate's 2000 *Song of the Earth*, and James McKusick's 2000 *Green Romanticism*—all define themselves in opposition to "cold war criticism": the constellation of New Historicist and post-structuralist cultural studies approaches.¹³ Quantitatively and qualitatively, these works emphasized Wordsworth, with the possible addition of Coleridge, as the starting point. Jonathan Bate's call to once again take Wordsworth's nature worship seriously repeated Abrams' rhetorical moves with respect to Hartman.¹⁴

After 2000, when ecocriticism had gained a secure status in the academy and New Historicism's own polemical positions had been re-examined, ecocriticism moved beyond its early emphasis on Wordsworth. Thus, Kevin Hutchings *Imagining Nature* (2002), Mark Lussier's *Romantic Dynamics* (2000), Onno Oerlemans *Romanticism and Materiality* (2002),

and Kate Rigby's *Topographies of the Sacred* (2004) considered Blakean urban poetics, Romantic science, empiricism, and reinhabitation poetics across a wide range of European writers.

To be fair, the emphasis on Wordsworth in early British ecocriticism is at least partly rhetorical and pragmatic. While Roe, Kroeber, McKusick, and Bate's prioritized Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Clare in the creation of Romantic nature, they also include work on Percy and Mary Shelley, Byron, Blake, Keats, and others. They also considered Romantic-period science as influencing the definition of nature, not just transcendental philosophy, and used historical materialism to critique the picturesque and Enlightenment technocratic ideology when it served their turn.

Nevertheless, the repeated use of the binary rhetoric has had a lingering effect in elevating Wordsworth as the paradigmatic "green Romantic," and delaying ecocritical considerations of Byron. A closer examination of how the main trunk of ecocriticism emerged from Jonathan Bate's originating *Romantic Ecology* shows why. In 1991, the situation called for a battle royale: Wordsworth's turn to nature had been so thoroughly discredited that Bate appeared to have felt that he had little choice but to attack New Historicism for perpetrating an injustice (Bate 1991, 2–3).¹⁵ Bate claimed that New Historicist critiques of Wordsworthian bad faith are distorted projections of their own anxieties as powerless, leftist intellectuals exiled from the centers of power by the ascendant philistines of Reagan's new right Republicans.¹⁶ They found a powerful rhetoric in Byron's debate with Wordsworth over who would have relevance in a post-Waterloo Europe, the sophisticated cosmopolitan or the provincial nationalist. By historicizing the New Historicists, Bate showed how their analysis was compromised by their own projected fears: it was not Wordsworth who interested McGann, but what a backsliding public intellectual represented for threatened academics in 1983.

Turning away from a sceptical, suspicious reading of Wordsworth, Bate proposed that "in some readings—and I hope to show that my reading of Wordsworth is one of them—the critic's purposes are also the writer's, and when this is the case there can be a communion between living reader and dead writer which may bring with it a particular enjoyment and a perception about endurance" (1991, 5).¹⁷ He went on to say that "the time is now right to allow Wordsworth to become once more what he imagined himself to be, what Shelley called him, and what he was to the Victorians: a 'Poet of Nature,'" celebrating integration between small-scale agricultural

economies and natural economies, and nostalgic for a way of life that was passing away during his moment in history (1991, 10).¹⁸

In a later essay, Bate affirmed that the importance of recovering “Wordsworth: Poet of Nature” had to do with 1990s politics in the West: “If the planet is to be saved, we in the super-developing West will have to change our ways; before we can change our ways, we will need new ways of conceptualizing the world. The nonhuman must be seen as something other than what both Marxism and capitalism see it as, the raw material for production. It must be viewed as Romanticism viewed it, with wonder and reverence, not rapaciousness” (1993, 161).

For Bate, a politics worth pursuing was one that subverted the orthodoxy of materialism, both capitalist and Marxist. It was a politics that declared the universal rights of nature found “through Wordsworth, through Ruskin and Morris, through aspects of Shelley,” and, it could be added, through ecocriticism’s sympathetic reading of Romanticism, with which “we may think our way into what it might mean for post-industrial human society to reconnect itself to the environment” (Bate 1993, 161). Thus, in order to respond to his own sense of late twentieth-century eco-crisis, the Romantic ecocritic was supposed to celebrate the way Romantic writers validated nature over culture as a source of freedom and truth, and accused civilization of fostering the alienating degradation of humans and nonhumans (Bate 2000, 32–38).¹⁹

Bate’s polemical, activist criticism hit a chord with academics engaged with environmentalism and set a precedent for future ecocriticism. In *Ecological Literary Criticism*, Karl Kroeber echoed Bate’s history of Romantic criticism: “the defective partialness of both approaches [Yale and New Historicism] springs from their common rootedness in a Cold War mind-set” (3). He contrasted the Yale and New Historicist versions of Romanticism with the ecocritical: “the Romantics, in contrast, made pleasure fundamental to human accomplishments because they believed that humankind belonged in, could and should be at home within, the world of natural processes. This is the foundation of what I shall call their proto-ecological views” (1994, 5).

Kroeber followed Bate by identifying Wordsworth as being “of special interest”: “my discussion begins with emphasis on Wordsworth and advances to concentration upon Shelley. This perspective makes possible a highlighting of how romantic poetry articulates a definition of humankind’s place in nature not incongruent with that of leading contemporary biologists” (1994, 20).

Nicholas Roe's *Politics of Nature* also set out to redeem the Romantic turn to nature from New Historicist critique, demonstrating "the inseparability of politics, nature, science, and the imagination at this period" (2002, 8). Poetry and the return to nature were political acts—as much as the "New Agrarianism" or the "Slow Food" movement of today. This led Roe to place political philosophy, life sciences, and other discursive modes alongside pastoral poetry in order to show how the basic thrust of intellectual work in the 1790s was to reconceptualize the place of human culture in the natural world. Wordsworth and Coleridge's politics of nature countered the discourses of modernity, urbanization, and commerce, setting an example for a similar politics of nature in the postmodern present. The nineteenth-century Romantic's or the twentieth-century ecocritic's return to nature was not a quietist retreat, but an activist defence of natural rights and freedoms.

Likewise, the politics of the Romantic return to nature shaped James McKusick's *Green Writing*, the first book to examine the influence of British Romantics on the forerunners of the American environmental movement. As with Bate, Kroeber, and Roe, McKusick offered his book as a corrective to the over-emphasis on social history that was ascendant in 1980s–1990s New Historicism. Like the other 1990s ecocritics, McKusick focused on overtly naturalistic writing and privileged writers who lived for extended periods near the natural world they wrote about. He thus gave great attention to the concept of *oikos*, which, as he pointed out, was the Greek word for "home" and "earth," and the root of "ecology," and claimed a specifically ecological understanding of "home" for Romantic writers by highlighting stories of dwelling and emplacement (*Walden*, *The Land of Little Rain*, "Home at Grasmere," Clare's lyrics), or of displacement, alienation and the search for home (*The Last Man*, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Blake's prophetic books). This interest in finding a "home" in the natural world echoed Abrams and significantly developed place-making as the defining trope of Romanticism and ecocriticism.

These summaries of major ecocritical works in the period 1990–2000 illustrated the fact that one of the leading self-authorizing gestures in early ecocriticism's return to Romantic nature was correcting New Historicism's over-emphasis on the social as literature's shaping influence (Rigby 2004, 3; Garrard 1996, 452; Buell 2005, 2–6).

The overcombateness of this engagement, however, made repurposing the ready-made rhetorical weaponry of the Bowles–Pope, Wordsworth–Byron controversies expedient.²⁰ Just as New Historicism

chose Byron to represent the socially engaged, historically aware writer, early ecocriticism chose Wordsworth to represent the ecologically aware, environmental activist who learned to reinhabit his local environment. The process created a horizon of understanding, Steven Cheeke explained, where “Wordsworthianism inevitably preconditions our thinking about Romanticism and place, eclipsing others” (2003, 9).

By virtue of the justifying rhetorics of both critical schools, Wordsworthian nature became ecocriticism’s epistemology, as Byron’s socially constructed nature was New Historicism’s, making it just as difficult to think that Wordsworth was compatible with cultural studies’ examinations of urban commodity culture as it was to think that Byron was compatible with ecocritical studies of ecological dwelling and human–nature interdependency.²¹

One reason that early ecocritics did not question the Byron–Wordsworth binary was that they developed their categories of “nature” and “nature writer” from environmentalist philosophy that traced its lineage back to the very Romantic writers on which early ecocritics focused, Wordsworth in particular (Buell 2005, 3; Garrard 2012, 1–5, 21–26, 34–36).²²

As Lawrence Buell has argued, for early ecocritics, “environment” effectively meant ‘natural environment’...[They] appraised ‘the effects of culture upon nature, with a view towards celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political actions’” (2005, 21).²³

The ecocritical model of nature encouraged a focus on the writers who sought encounters with the sublime, mystical forces of nature in remote outbacks, such as on Mount Snowdon or the Vale of Chamonix. Ecocritical philosophies of dwelling found affirmation in the rural subsistence communities celebrated in “Michael,” Chapter Eight of the *Prelude*, the *Excursion*, or John Clare’s works. These writers came to stand for precursors of an ecocentric “Natural Contract” as an alternative to the Enlightenment’s anthropocentric “Social Contract,” and showed how twentieth-century environmental activism was validated by historical precedent (McKusick 2000, 19–33).²⁴

Thus, using the readymade rhetoric of Romantic canonicity not only reified problematic Wordsworth–Byron stereotypes, it also reinforced the alignment of the early ecocritical environmentalist world view and activist agenda with the writers they analysed (Morton 2007, 185–207; Hess 2012, 3–16). In this world view, the city and most urban forms of social and cultural organization stood for the ills of modernism, anthropocentrism, and a technorational domination over nature.

As Wordsworth characterized it in the *Prelude*, the city was where humans were most alienated from the harmonies of nature's rhythms, and thus least capable of achieving the prophetic vision of how humans were at home in the world. Bate's ecocritical project enlisted Romantic writers who shared his modern concern that "a lack of rootedness and a metropolitan brashness are associated with modernity and corruption" (1999, 2). In this way, Wordsworth's poetry gained stature as the metric for evaluating other writers' green credentials, and obviously, by the Wordsworthian metric, Byron did not appear to be much of an ecological writer.

2.2 RETURNING TO HEIDEGGER

To bring a Heideggerian poetics of being and dwelling to bear in the ecocritical reinterpretation of romantic literature is, in a sense, to reread romanticism romantically. —Kate Rigby (2004), 6

When we stand upon our native soil,
 Unelbowed by such objects as oppress
 Our active powers, those powers themselves become
 Strong to subvert our noxious qualities;
 They sweep distemper from the busy day,
 And make the chalice of the big round year
 Run o'er with gladness; whence the Being moves
 In beauty through the world; and all who see
 Bless him, rejoicing in his neighbourhood.
 —William Wordsworth (1977), *The Excursion*, Bk. 9, 129–137

As Greg Garrard has written, early Romantic ecocritics often applied Deep Ecology's reinterpretation of Martin Heidegger's theories of dwelling, poetics, and technology, which, as Kate Rigby has asserted, is a Romantic rereading of Romanticism.²⁵

Important Deep Ecology philosophers include Arne Naess, Kirpatrick Sale, and David Abrams, and the two main tenants are the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature and the inevitable alienation of humans from nature as a consequence of living in the modern world (Garrard 2012, 24). Inspiration from Deep Green writing and environmental activism spurred ecocritics to incorporate Heidegger's influential theory of "dwelling," which tracked

connections between spatial closeness, cognitive understanding, emotional attachment, and an ethical responsibility to care for one's place.

Dwelling, reinterpreted through Wordsworth as "stand[ing] upon our native soil," became the crucial term for identifying writers who are environmental, and for discussing their particular ecological consciousness. The interest in viewing alienation and dwelling as dominant tropes in Romanticism played out in the frequent observation that the Greek word for "home," *oikos*, is also the root for "ecology," suggesting an inherent connection between ecological consciousness and the longing for belonging in the natural world.²⁶

However, as Ursula K. Heise has explained, relying on Heidegger and Deep Ecology overemphasizes a sense of place and localist writers at the expense of a sense of planet and cosmopolitan writers (2008, 20–38). The easy compatibility of ecocriticism, Romanticism, Deep Ecology, and Heidegger encourages the loco-centric focus while excluding translocal, migratory methods of developing eco-consciousness. The issue is not the importance or relevance of understanding Romantic reinhabitation poetics through Heideggerian or Deep Ecology frameworks, but how their dominance shaped early ecocritical discourse in British Romanticism.

Heise traces ecocriticism's lococentrism to the mid-sixties "back to the land" environmentalist movement, which identified Romantics such as Thoreau and Wordsworth as heroes (2008, 28–30). While this necessarily simplified complexities and contradictions in Romantic writings, it helped the movement cohere around an ethic of care for the environment, affirming that ecological awareness originated in acts of imaginative identification with the specific place where one spent time creating intimate connections.

This was a well-established theory by the time British Romantic ecocritics reopened the case for Romantic nature. For example, Onno Oerlemans' well-respected book proposed that attention to the particular is the prerequisite for developing awareness of ecosystem interconnectedness, from which follows deep respect for the nonhuman other with whom one dwells, and the desire to practice reciprocal relations of care (2004, 18).²⁷ For many environmentalists, awareness of human environs requires long-term residence in a chosen locale and rejection of high mobility. Only by staying in one place would the practice of attention to the particular develop sufficiently.²⁸

While ecocritical analysis provided proof and greater theoretical precision for environmentalism's popular praxis, the praxis aligned with Deep

Ecology's theory that modernity's urbanism and mobility were existential threats. Such a theory owed a debt to Heidegger's late analysis of technology and dwelling, where global capitalism's large-scale centralization of social relations was countered by local place-making.

This became the primary strategy of the environmental conservationist's resistance to capitalism. Local inhabitants were presumed to be able to develop knowledge of the interdependencies that sustained self-sufficiency and ecological integrity in their places, and be empowered to defend them from centralization, gigantism, homogenization, and instrumentalization.²⁹ Thus, environmentalism concentrated on validating small-scale communities and the reinhabitation of place as pathways to developing an ethic of care for the environment.

Because Romantic ecocriticism's "return to nature" emerged in the context of environmentalism's lococentric praxis (Heise 2008, 41), it had privileged lococentric place studies—an investigation of how communities, but particularly individuals, understood, map, relate to, and construct a sense of belonging in the places they occupy.³⁰ Many ecocritics examined writers who model how humans can once again "dwell" in the earth, or be at home in the *oikos*, and made place studies a vitally important frame for understanding Romanticism.

For example, Onno Oerlemans asserted that the fundamental problem for environmental thinking was understanding the place of humanity and consciousness in the physical order of things (2004, 6). Steven Cheeke claimed that "there is a foundational struggle over the meaning of place in Romanticism" (2003, 9).³¹ Kate Rigby posited that the Romantics turned to nature out of an urgent need to find topographical belonging in an age of unprecedented dislocation. She proposed that studying Romantic reinhabitation can teach contemporary readers the art of belonging counter to our experience of violent de-territorialization and social transformation (2004, 45–53).³² These three examples showed that there are sometimes scalar differences in the definition of place, but generally place studies in Romantic ecocriticism has meant "local."

Pursuing this focus, Romantic ecocriticism found Heidegger's phenomenology of place-making particularly compatible. In his essays on poetry, dwelling, and becoming, Heidegger asked several key questions that ecocritics embraced: How does a poet dwell? How does his or her poetry represent the attempt to dwell? How are the formal aspects of the poem instantiations of dwelling? These three questions have focused Romantic ecocritical practice on local place-making, to the point that, according to

Lawrence Buell, “being there” became a requirement for environmental awareness, and translocal mobility a disqualification (2005, 68).

Jonathan Bate, James McKusick, Scott McEathron, Kate Rigby, and Ashton Nichols all have employed Heidegger’s philosophy of being and dwelling to understand how Romantic writers attempted to reimagine their place in the natural world.³³ The accord between Jonathan Bate and Martin Heidegger can be seen in the two following statements:

If mortals dwell in that they save the earth and if poetry is the original admission of dwelling, then poetry is the place where we save the earth. (Bate 2000, 283)

When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth, and then—as Holderlin says in his last poem—“the life of man” is a “dwelling life”. (Heidegger 2001, 227)

The first is from the conclusion to Bate’s *Song of the Earth*, perhaps the single most important ecocritical work on British Romanticism to come out of the 1990s; the second is from the conclusion to Heidegger’s “... Poetically Man Dwells...”; his most influential literary philosophy. What made certain Romantic period poets significant, according to Bate, is that they used their experience of dislocation and separation from nature to create a poetics of belonging; they turned to language and imagination to “half perceive / And [half] create” healing connections between nature and humans. This repeated Heidegger’s theory, who was himself consciously returning to the Romantics (Holderlin).

In *Green Writing*, James McKusick used Heidegger’s notion of dwelling to determine which Romantic writers were “authentically ecological.”³⁴ The “true ecological writer must be ‘rooted’ in the landscape, instinctively attuned to the changes of the Earth and its inhabitants” (2000, 24).³⁵ A rooted attunement to the local place prepared one to intuit “the most essential insights of ecological thought—namely, the adaptation of species to their habitats, the interrelatedness of all life forms, and the potentially catastrophic effects of human intervention in natural systems” (28). McKusick went on to explain that ecological insight was available to writers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge because they were:

more than just itinerant observers of scenic beauty; they are dwellers in the landscape of the Lake District, and the poetry that they composed in this

region often adopts the persona of a speaker whose voice is inflected by the local and personal history of the place he inhabits. Such a perspective may legitimately be termed an ecological view of the natural world, since their poetry consistently expresses a deep and abiding interest in the Earth as a dwelling-place for all living things. The word ecology (first recorded in the English language in 1873) is derived from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning house or dwelling-place, and the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge clearly foreshadows the modern science of ecology in its holistic conception of the Earth as a household, a dwelling-place for an interdependent biological community (29).

McKusick emphasizes that long-term, committed dwelling in a place is a prerequisite for the ecological world view of interconnectedness and habitat adaptation. The practice of dwelling is both a product and a process of adapting to a place, of finding belonging. The pastoral mode, lyrical style, and picturesque setting are most likely to yield ecological insights, as long as the poet consciously thinks himself into his place as a resident or community member.³⁶ The poetry, a product of the poet's labor to dwell, thus presents a theory of dwelling, and, in its harmonious formal arrangements, instantiates the dwelling of human language in the natural world.³⁷

However, if Heidegger's notion of dwelling was the litmus test of an ecological poet, then how could ecocriticism approach a cosmopolitan itinerant such as Byron? To repurpose a phrase from Jonathan Bate, the received critical view was that Byron displayed "a lack of rootedness [and...] a metropolitan brashness [...] associated with modernity and with corruption" (2000, 3). Masques, balls, servants, lovers, and political rebellions hardly seemed conducive to the ascetic discipline required to "live in rhythm with nature" (2000, 3). Of Bate's list of six unifying themes for Romantic eco-poetry, four automatically excluded Byron:

The enervation of the human spirit under the rule of technology and industry; retreat from the town as return to a natural life in which the human spirit is integrated with its environment; the imagining of a lost tribe of humans in the state of nature; a reference to nature's 'children' which implies that in childhood we might approximate the conditions of that lost tribe; critique of the Baconian-Cartesian dream of mastery, together with its politics of oppression...; and implicit condemnation of orthodox religion for its abnegation of the energies of natural life. (2000, 56–57)

The first four show the influence of Heidegger, while the last two show Adorno's influence on social ecology. While Bate did not claim that all Romantic writers must exhibit all of these themes to be classified as a Romantic ecopoet, the list worked effectively to steer ecocriticism toward writers who were "dwellers with the land."

Song of the Earth exemplified this imbalance. Two short, inspired passages on Byron provided "a necessary antidote to the Wordsworthian solitary [...exceptions to the rule that] William Wordsworth remained the founding father for thinking of poetry in relation to place, to our dwelling upon the earth" (205).³⁸

According to Bate, Wordsworth's poetry taught the essential lessons of ecological bioregionalism: "stay true to the pull of the spot as opposed to the nation and you have a longing for belonging that is the essence of ecopoesis" (212). Scott McEathron echoed this premise when he argued that living with and among the local peasantry gave Wordsworth the authority to translate their "localect" into a philosophical poetry of dwelling, an authority that itinerants would not gain (2001, 204). The upshot of this logic was that the eco-poet was recognized first by his commitment to intimate knowledge of the people and things in a local place, and second by his ability to translate situated knowledge into poetry that celebrated the work of belonging to a place.

However, this Heideggarian frame for identifying the essence of ecopoesis was not actually supported by a fuller reading of Heidegger. Instead, it showed how ecocritics had turned to Deep Ecologists' reinterpretations of Heidegger. Bate, for example, used Kirkpatrick Sale's definition of dwelling:

[In order] to become dwellers in the land...to come to know the earth, fully and honestly, *the crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task* is to understand the place, *the immediate, specific place, where we live*...We must somehow *live as close to [the land] as possible*, be in touch with its particular soils, its waters, its winds; *we must learn its ways*, its capacities, its limits; we must *make its rhythms our patterns*, its laws our guide, its fruit our bounty. (2000, 232, emphasis added)

I highlight the phrases that distinguish the way Sale narrowed Heidegger's late essay, "Poetically Man Dwells," to insist on the local and particular, and on the "wise passiveness" that regarded "Nature as our teacher" (Wordsworth 2000, "Expostulation and Reply," 24; "The Tables

Turned,” 16). This reversal of Enlightenment dualism, active man/passive nature, has been characterized as one type of Romanticism. Not only does it exclude Byron, it also selectively reads Wordsworth’s complicated group of “dwelling” poems, particularly *The Excursion* and its thematic prelude, the unpublished “Home at Grasmere.”

My epigraph for this section seems to affirm the narrow definition of dwelling that Sale and Bate have elaborated: “When we stand upon our native soil, / Unelbowed by such objects as oppress / Our active powers,” then we see, “whence the Being moves / In beauty through the world” (1977, *Excursion*, Bk. 9.129–36). The preceding lines describe dwelling as an antidote to life subject to modern, industrial capitalism (93–126); however, the following lines outline a plan of national education and benevolent imperialism leading to a *pax Britannica* utopia (290–411). While rural dwelling is clearly one, perhaps the ideal, method of achieving the liberty and connection required for full self-realization (255–289), it is not a panacea: rural inhabitants are as likely to suffer modernity’s dislocating effects as urbanites (152–186), and self-realization is equally available to all, rich or poor, urban or rural, through God-given mental powers (138–254).

“Home at Grasmere” also blurs the line between dwelling as a connection to a physical place that one calls “home” and dwelling as an imaginative vision of integration achievable anywhere. The speaker repeatedly emphasizes that secure enclosure within “this individual Spot / This small abiding-place” (164–165) is a rare gift that requires a reciprocal duty (875–883): in his case, to project his mutualistic vision of how man *and* nature are fitted *for* each other to the larger world (959–972). Yet his epithalamion to man and nature seems to require physical dwelling: only once safely enclosed within Grasmere’s hills does Wordsworth experience mental liberation from heroic desire (934–958).

In the reassuring stillness of nature’s disciplining influence, his powers of contemplation are freed, and he becomes aware of inward things (208–210), satisfies his longing for belonging (153–170), and achieves a state of grace in which “all who see / Bless him, rejoicing in his *neighbourhood*.” Wordsworth describes the process of dwelling in Grasmere as his particular, unique calling, not a universal process that everyone could or should follow. While both poems illustrate dwelling achieved through a process of establishing intimacy with our place of origin and those closest to us, they also deploy plentiful images of wandering that divorce physical inhabitation of a place from dwelling. For Bate to recast Sale’s definition of

dwelling as a general truth about Romantic ecopoets, he must select certain Wordsworthian statements and leave others aside.³⁹

Emphasizing a strict form of inhabiting rural places may be a useful way of distinguishing one characteristically Romantic version of caring for nature, but Heidegger actually said that dwelling had nothing to do with physical residence: “above all, it does not assert that to dwell means to occupy a house, a dwelling place...Dwelling so understood is always merely the occupying of a lodging” (2001, 212–213). Heidegger defined dwelling as the active imaginative process by which humans emplace themselves within the fourfold of “Mortals, Sky, Earth, and Divinities”: “the phrase ‘poetically man dwells’ says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell. But through what do we attain to a dwelling place? Through building. Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building” (2001, 213).⁴⁰ Residing in a physical place is not necessary for dwelling, but creative (poetic) language use is.

Importantly, Heidegger authorized his definition by privileging the oldest usage of the key words: “what, then, does *Bauen*, building, *mean*?” He suggested that there were two meanings. The first is the more standard —“to remain, to stay in place,” corresponding to the notion of residency. The measure of residency depends on the length of time a person spends in that place, and the degree and quality of integration into that place—measures that Bate, McKusick, McEathron, and other ecocritics have used to establish Wordsworth as the standard eco-poet. However, Heidegger goes on to say that there is an older meaning for dwelling: “the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell” (2001, 145). He asserted that:

The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell. What if man’s homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as the plight? Yet as soon as man gives thought to his homelessness, it is the sole summons that calls mortals into their dwelling. (Heidegger 2001, 159)

This statement unites Wordsworth, Clare, and Byron, all of whom gave lifetimes of thought to their very different experiences of homelessness in the Romantic period. All three reacted by writing poetry, “as the authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling, [which] is the primal form of

dwelling” (Heidegger 2001, 224–225). They used poetry to “release into the unconcealedness of being” all of the intricate and hidden interconnections in which they were embedded within the four folds of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. Heidegger referred to this building up of self as “a letting be,” entirely specific to each individual’s “authentic presencing.”

“Home at Grasmere” teaches how Wordsworth dwelled in the Lake District in 1802, not how Byron dwelt while travelling across Europe in 1816. For both, however, a method of poetic thinking, building, and dwelling led to a “building up of self as a ‘letting be’”: developing a consciousness of how the self is environed, how that self belongs to that environment (rather than being an autonomous agent), and how ethical care for one’s environs evolves from the experience of reciprocity that one gains from belonging.

In fact, I would argue that a stanza from *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Canto III, illustrates Heidegger’s broader notion of “poetically man dwells” as well as anything from Wordsworth:

‘Tis to create, and in creating live
 A being more intense, that we endow
 With form our fancy, gaining as we give
 The life we image, even as I do now—
 What am I? Nothing: but not so art though,
 Soul of my thought! With whom I traverse earth
 Invisible but gazing, as I glow
 Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
 And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings’ dearth (III, 45–54).

This famous stanza answers a question that Byron asked in the previous stanza: why do men who have grown old through their experience of alienation seek refuge in the “airy images, and shapes which dwell / Still unimpair’d, though old, in the soul’s haunted cell”? (III, 44–45). Most critics presume that Byron’s statement affirms an inward turn, rejecting the world in favor of inhabiting “his own dark mind” (III. 20).⁴¹ They point to Stanza 7 where he admits that too often he has become absorbed in his own turbulent thoughts and turned away from the world. However, Byron carefully avoids the inward turn by emphasizing the building up of the “Soul of his Thought,” a process of environing the “I” in the earth across which they traverse, and without which the “I” is otherwise an autonomous “nothing.”

In Byron's ontology, environing the self is a poetic labor of building a dwelling in the *oikos*, and, as in Heidegger, it produces belonging that eventuates in ethical care. This is precisely *not* an idealist move into progressively more abstract and autonomous affirmations of "I." Rather, thought is generated by the experience of existential alienation, the incommensurate difference between mind and body, self and society, human and nonhuman world, which drives thought inward to the resources of the soul only in order to bring "unimpaired" shapes back into the world, or, as Byron put it, endowing "with form our fancy."

Even in his most alienated moments, Byron described his intellectual process as an interpenetrating dialectic of belonging to the world, and in the eighth stanza of the canto, he consciously turns away from the self-indulgent lure of autonomy, committing to this dwelling dialectic. Thus, Byron's most passionate exile's lament, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III*, is also an extended meditation on how the discipline of wandering exile is vital for ontological dwelling, building a home in the four-fold—the *oikos*.

In *Topographies of the Sacred*, Kate Rigby proposed that *dislocation* might actually be the condition for dwelling, since dwelling is an art that must be learned, rather than something inherited from one's ancestors: "crucially, it is in the context of the loss of a sense of belonging that the romantic reaffirmation of dwelling needs to be situated" (12).⁴² As she noted in reference to the explorer Alexander von Humboldt:

A kind of itinerancy, however, is not necessarily incompatible with dwelling. Indeed, there is a sense in which not being at home, experiencing the place in which one lives, tarrys, or strays as unknown or strange, is of the very essence of dwelling. (Rigby 2004, 89)

Since dwelling is a continual act of attunement and building, it does not necessarily require long-term residence (90). As evidence, Rigby applied Michel Harr's notion of "ecstatic dwelling" to claim that travellers like Humboldt practiced a form of dwelling:

To open oneself to the givenness of earth and sky in the abiding strangeness of even the most familiar of places, as well as to tarry or stray in places that are genuinely foreign, places, perhaps, where one is exposed to the elemental and the uninhabitable, from which, in our daily living, we are bound to take shelter, is, Haar suggests, to dwell 'ecstatically.'...To open oneself to the

sublime dimension of an earthly dwelling place is nonetheless very different from being forced to abandon one's home, seeing a holy place profaned, or a beloved place made strange, perhaps even rendered uninhabitable, for those who formerly dwelt there. Ecstatic dwelling is not identical to homelessness, although it might present itself as a welcome possibility for the itinerant. (Rigby 2004, 91)

The poetic record in *Childe Harold* Cantos III and IV, as well as in other post-1816 works, if not always the letters and daily actions, is a testament to Byron's aspiration to dwell ecstatically in the four-fold of the given, as later chapters will demonstrate. Although Rigby did not examine Byron, her speculation about ecstatic dwelling as one of the main Romantic responses to the common experience of dislocation—an experience that she claimed characterized a trans-European Romanticism—offered a crucial opportunity for rethinking the categories of the Romantic ecopoet, dwelling, nature, and what constituted ecological critique.

2.3 BYRON, SCIENTIFIC GEOGRAPHY, AND PANARCHY

The character of the savage is modified everywhere by the nature of the climate and the soil where he lives...such are the factors that link the geography of plants to the political and intellectual history of mankind [and] ...the explanation for the influence exerted by nature on the people's taste and imagination. —Alexander von Humboldt and Aime Bonpland (2008), *Essay on the Geography of Plants*, 1807, 70, 73

Increasingly, local problems of the moment can have part of their cause located half a planet away and have causes whose source is from slow changes accumulated over centuries...rang[ing] from fast processes of vegetative growth in ecosystems and of economic production in economics, to slow processes of geomorphological change and of human cultural and political development. —Lance Gunderson and C. S. Holling, 2002, 21

If dwelling ecstatically is an accurate description of how Byron created his relation to nature, the praxis also led to the development of a far-reaching and important ecological critique of sociocultural institutions, what I am calling “Byron's cultural ecology.” While cultural ecology emerged in the 1960s as an anthropological method, it had roots in classical social geography and a legacy in the scientific ecology of Lance Gunderson and Buzz

Holling (“Panarchy”) and modern social geography. These schools of thought applied ecological theory and methods to human and natural organizations, offering a powerful insight into the way power dynamics within relationships transform organizations over time and across scales.

The Romantic period was one point of origin for these ideas, specifically in writers such as Byron and Johann von Goethe. Geographers such as Carl Ritter and Alexander von Humboldt published works in 1804 and 1807, respectively, that lay out the basic theories and goals of classical geography: “to illuminate the ways in which spatial structures, operations of natural elements, and the distribution of natural products combine to mold both the individual and the collective life of humans” (Tang 2008, 53).

Both Ritter and Humboldt “conceptualized the human world as a complex system of diverse forces ranging from the physiological and the psychological to the social and the political. This system of forces stands in a relation of interdependency and reciprocal determination to the system of forces that make up terrestrial nature” (Tang 2008, 53). Goethe’s holistic concept of “organic morphology” shaped Humboldt’s early form of bioregionalism, as did Johan Gottfried von Herder’s concept of acclimatization, published 1784–1791, which postulated that “particular climates foster specific kinds plants and animal, ‘biotic communities’ as we would call them today, as well as particular kinds of physical and cultural adaptation in the human population” (Jackson 2008, 8; Rigby 2004, 72–74).

If, as Rigby has argued, “it is clearly justified to speak of a ‘romantic ecology,’” when we talk about Humboldt, Herder, Goethe, and Ritter, it is equally important to note that this ecological discourse has more in common with social geography and cultural ecology than with the sublime wilderness transcendentalism defined by Romantic Nature (Rigby 2004, 33).

While we might distinguish the poetic Byron from the scientific Germans, intellectuals of the time did not make that distinction, as Chenxi Tang has confirmed: “The geographic imagining of human society was carried out in a wide and complex discursive field, encompassing not only science but also philosophy and literature, not only verbal but also visual representations, such as maps and paintings” (2008, 6–7). Chenxi Tang, Kate Rigby, Stephen Jackson, and Malcolm Nicolson all have describes the broad study of reciprocal nature–culture influences developing during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, from which emerged many scientific disciplines, including ecology, as articulated in social sciences and earth systems sciences. In this discourse, artists, poets, travellers,

and philosophers contributed as much as scientists. If Humboldt's ecstatic dwelling shaped his critical understanding of human–nature relations, leading eventually to the establishment of the science of social geography, then we can plausibly assert that Byron's ecstatic dwelling also inspired his critical understanding of human–nature relations, leading eventually to his poetics of cultural ecology. Byron's cultural ecology has a place in the nineteenth century's competitive, multidisciplinary attempt to explain the human–nature interrelationship.

Byron deployed his brand of cultural ecology in the same historical context and in response to a similar pressure to develop reliable knowledge of the evolution of cultural identities from their specific environmental conditions. His travels impelled a personal interest in correlating identity to environment, just as Humboldt's travels and Goethe's travels did for them. Given the extensive overlap between Byron's experiences, explanatory needs, and contemporaneity with the thinkers who developed social geography, it would be surprising if Byron did not incorporate their ideas into his own discourse.

Byron's interest in the new sciences and the prominence of Humboldt's works in Europe—and the fact that they were published in French—makes it highly likely that he was acquainted with Humboldt's theories. Byron references Humboldt in Canto IV of *Don Juan* and requested “Voyages and Travels” from Murray in 1821 (Byron 1973, Vol. 8, 219.). He certainly could have read Humboldt's sensational, highly popular *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent*, translated by Helen Maria Williams and published in multiple volumes by Longman's 1814–1829, or read reviews of his equally sensational 1805 lecture in Paris on the geography of plants.

Byron was personally acquainted with Goethe, having dedicated two plays to him and exchanged many letters. Although I find no record of Byron's having read Ritter or Herder, he certainly developed a similar speculation that the character of a people shapes and is shaped by its environment in dynamic ways. Because Byron's cultural ecology shares core ideas with the emergent science of social geography and was part of the same intellectual ferment that led to its formation, we can posit that Byron assimilated social geography and evolutionary theory as it suited his needs, thus establishing a historical grounding for his cultural ecology.

Byron's writings show that he understood how dynamic interdependencies between important vectors in physical nature, living beings, and human culture co-shaped Greek, Italian, and other European cities and

civilizations. This theory is given far greater precision in “Panarchy,” an attempt to explain large- and small-scale transformations in human and natural systems over geological and human history.

Panarchy proposes that all complex, adaptive systems, human as well as natural, are composed of multiscale, nested sets of semi-autonomous systems that cycle regularly through four phases at different speeds across scales. The larger systems tend to operate slowly and to be conservative, while smaller systems operate faster and, by introducing novelty, are forces of change: “fast levels invent, experiment, and test; the slower levels stabilize and conserve accumulated memory of past successful, surviving experiments” (Gunderson and Holling 2002, 76). “The whole panarchy is both creative and conserving” according to Lance Gunderson and Buzz Holling, who developed the idea that: “in a healthy society, each level is allowed to operate at its own pace, protected from above by slower, larger levels, but invigorated from below by faster, smaller cycles of innovation” (76).

Innovation from below brings new, unexpected combinations of existing elements and potentials to light, creating new opportunities to evolve and accumulate further potential. Creativity in society is essentially bricolage; in nature, it is epigenesis (Gunderson and Holling 2002, 88–90). Of course, innovation can be destabilizing, which is why a sustainable system is layered with larger, slower scales that control the upward flow of innovative energy. However, when entrenched interests impede innovation in order to preserve their own self-interests and positions, then the systems shift into a more rigid, conserving state (Gunderson and Holling 2002, 55–61). Innovation from below is blocked by the self-interested accumulation of the power, wealth, and resources created by the system. Freedom in a system can be measured by the degree of unrestricted transfer within and between scales in the system, as well as the degree of openness to experimental combination, testing, and bricolage.⁴³

As I will explain in later chapters, Byron’s model of the complex, adaptive, human–nature systems is a rough sketch of what Gunderson and Holling demonstrate with scientific rigor in *Panarchy*. Like them, Byron measured freedom in the same way, as an index to the degree of openness to experimental combination in the sets of nested relationships that make up culture, society, nature, and their larger integration.

As in panarchy, Byron theorized that rigid, tyrannical geopolitics reappeared throughout human history as a reactionary attempt to control and

conserve the creative energies released during prior phases of cultural flowering and creative freedom. The forces of reaction inevitably overreached and brought about systemic collapse, but the phase of devolution enabled creative energies to reassemble, leading to revolution and rebirth. Because Byron, like Humboldt and other social geographers and social ecologists, defines human culture as an evolved outgrowth of socio-natural interdependencies, this theory of adaptive change applies to all systems; it is “The History [that] hath but one Page.”

Byron’s historically specific theories of cultural ecology developed from his empirical observations of the co-shaping relation between a place and its people, and from being part of a pan-European discourse community that theorized about the degree to which spontaneity, self-determination, reciprocity, and openness are necessary to their continued functioning.

Humboldt, with whom Byron shared at least some experiential parallels, achieved similar conclusions. Others within the discourse community, including Wordsworth and Coleridge, formulated different conclusions about how human–natural systems worked. In this book, I will argue that Byron’s theory of cultural ecology had a great deal of relevance for understanding Romanticism as a broadly disputed discourse about the nature of nature. Specifically, Byron’s cultural ecology provided a Romantic theory of nature that offered insight into our contemporary concerns with the planet.

2.4 BACK TO THE FUTURE: BYRON’S ECOCOSMOPOLITANISM

Lord Byron turned to the [cosmopolitan] figure found in such tales to counter the domestic patriot in native poets like Southey and Wordsworth. —Esther Wohlgemut (2009), 95

The point of an eco-cosmopolitan critical project, therefore, would be to go beyond the aforementioned “ethic of proximity” so as to investigate by what means individuals and groups in specific cultural contexts have succeeded in envisioning themselves in similarly concrete fashion as part of the global biosphere. —Ursula K. Heise (2008), 62

I am a Citizen of the World—content where I am now—but able to find a country elsewhere. —Lord Byron, George Gordon (1973), Vol. 9, 78

In addition to offering an ontological theory of dwelling compatible with the itinerant experience, and an ecological critique of cultural development and the accumulation of power, Byron's ecological thinking provided the foundation for eco-cosmopolitanism, a concept Ursula K. Heise has defined as "a sense of planet—a sense of how political, economic, technological, social, cultural and ecological networks shape daily routines" (2008, 55). Such an investigation is relevant to today's highly mobile global population, which faces an existential threat to its habitat from anthropogenic climate change, an ultimate form of dislocation.

Ecotheorists such as Heise argue that, unless humanity can learn to care for the well-being of the whole planet, not just some particular corner, then we are unlikely to make the sacrifices needed to meet the threat of climate change (10). She has encouraged environmentalists to augment their local- and national-centrism with cosmopolitanism; in like manner, Romantic ecocritics can broaden their history of environmental consciousness so as to account for the simultaneous development of local and translocal eco-consciousness.

Localist movements of reinhabitation are important counters to some destructive aspects of de-territorialization and aggressive capitalism, but if long-term residence is the prerequisite for developing attachments to place, situated knowledge, and care for the environment, then only the very privileged, who can choose to stay put, or the extremely disempowered, who have no choice but to stay put, will fit the criteria.⁴⁴ The rest of us belong to highly mobile diasporas.

As I shall detail later, high mobility may prevent some level of situated knowledge, but it may offer other forms of belonging and knowledge that lead to a different, broader form of ecological knowledge and care. Furthermore, lococentrism alone is ineffective for resisting global capitalism, which, through violent de-territorialization, destroys local self-sufficiency, identity, and place attachment (Buell 2001, 64–65).⁴⁵ Since de-territorialization is part of a globalized threat to planetary well-being, it should be countered by new ways of imagining a planetary scale belonging that are complemented by localist re-territorializing strategies (Heise 2008, 4–5). Heise has suggested that eco-cosmopolitan strategies will enable individuals and communities to form and maintain place-based attachments across different scales and pathways (5, 61).

Modern environmentalism's lococentric theory of place-making can be traced to the eighteenth-century European reaction to massive dislocation

and de-territorialization caused by transnational capitalism, aggressive war, empire, and an acquisitive political elite (Gottlieb and Shields 2013, 6–34).⁴⁶ However, the diasporic communities caused by these dislocating, historical forces, such as slaves, political, economic, and religious refugees, and other emigrants, constructed a type of belonging that encompassed large spaces, dispersed social relationships and symbolic references.⁴⁷

Just as Rigby has demonstrated that homelessness motivates the “longing for belonging” that leads to dwelling, Heise has opined that an exile’s experience can better teach the skills of adaptation, mastering solastalgia, and reciprocating with multiple places.⁴⁸

If it is true, as Neil Evernden has suggested, that homo sapiens are “‘natural aliens,’ creatures without fixed habitat who can locate ourselves pretty much anywhere,” then, in a sense, we are all exiles needing to learn reinhabitation, or how to ethically environ the self (quoted in Buell 2005, 71).

According to Heise, the challenge of practicing attunement and adaptation across geographical space can foster a global ethical commitment to human and nonhuman affiliations that are mutually sustaining. Lococentric environmentalists posit proximity as necessary to developing an ethic of care, but Heise, Rigby, Fiona Robinson, and others have posited that the most important requirement is developing a sense of the fragile co-dependence of all living things.⁴⁹ This understanding can evolve from local knowledge, but, as is well known, localism can easily foster parochialism sustaining a hidden xenophobia, an attitude that could more positively describe a commitment to the fragile co-dependence of one’s tribe or family (Heise 2008, 9).⁵⁰

As Lawrence Buell has argued, such a tribal loco-centric ideal of self-sufficient, autonomous places is not compatible with the true ecological vision of interconnectedness (Buell 2001, 263–264). In contrast, a more universal benevolence and an integrated ecological vision can develop from the adaptive, affiliative work of an eco-cosmopolitan itinerant. Eco-cosmopolitanism is a practice of attunement to the way all ecosystems are co-dependent, turning an exile’s “longing for belonging” into awareness that fragility and vulnerability are common experiences across all living beings.⁵¹ In this spirit, I turn from the long-dominant Romantic ecolocalist focus to describe Byron’s eco-cosmopolitanism.

The four cantos of *Childe Harold* offer an ideal case for how displacement, exile, and wandering inspire “longing for belonging” and require

Byron to relearn an ecocosmopolitan sense of planet.⁵² When he wrote those cantos, Byron was both a highly mobile writer discovering places storied with songs that needed to be sung, and a roaming ethnographer gleaning insights from interdisciplinary place study and local informants.

Esther Wohlgenut has emphasized Byron's labor to learn local cultures, customs, and languages, while retaining English identity points and connections, as an example of an adaptive, cosmopolitan strategy of belonging (2009, 105). The cantos reveal his ability to cross boundaries, understand comparative advantages, and build solidarity around a perception of shared human and nonhuman interdependencies. At the same time, they show his growing critique of the narrow prejudices that "root" nontravelers in regional or national error. His adaptive belonging is visible in his identity claims to world citizenship, which he used to differentiate himself from the rest of his compatriots throughout his public life:

I am so convinced...of the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an Islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to set our young men abroad.... Here I see and have conversed with French, Italians, Germans, Danes, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, &c. &c. &c. Without losing sight of my own, I can judge of the countries and manners of others. —Where I see the superiority of England (which by the bye we are a good deal mistaken about in many things) I am pleased, and where I find her inferior I am at least enlightened (Byron 1973, Vol. 2, 34–35).

Later, in *Don Juan*, Byron applied the difference between his cosmopolitanism and his country's parochialism to critiques of Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge: "There is a narrowness in such a notion / Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for ocean" (Byron 2000, "Dedication," 39–40). Constructing himself as the cosmopolitan wandering exile with a sense of planet and awareness of the environmental injustice of global capitalism and colonialism, Byron presented a useful contrast to Wordsworthian place-making.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Life flourishes at the edge of chaos. —Stuart A. Kauffman, *Origins of Order*, 1993 (Quoted in Gunderson and Holling, 2002, 83)

My claim throughout the following chapters is that Byron developed a vision of the dynamic interconnectedness of the living and nonliving beings he encountered. This vision was the basis for his ecological understanding of the metabolic energy flows connecting human society and the nonhuman environment. He used this ecological understanding to theorize how urban places are products of their environment that also influence the shape of that environment.

As his theory of cultural ecology developed complexity, it informed his notion of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, aesthetics, and identity, world history, geopolitics, and economics, and his political activism. In his later poetry, he developed an ecotone poetics that emphasized the surprising hybridity of meaning when words belonging to different associative sets were placed in apposition. His transversal understanding of dwelling led to a vision of geographical interconnectedness and co-creative dependency that embraced both a sense of planet and a relational ontology. His claim to eco-cosmopolitan citizenship entailed an awareness of the fragility and vulnerability shared by all living things, requiring an ecological ethics of reciprocity and care. This book will trace these ideas through Byron's major poetry in order to present Byron's ecological thought within the context of British Romantic ecology and make a claim for a broader understanding of that period's importance in the history of ecological thought.

In Chap. 2, I show how Cantos I and II of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* lay the groundwork for Byron's theory of cultural ecology, the idea that human-built environments and cultures evolve from their environmental settings. By comparing Byron's discovery of the key theories of cultural ecology to Alexander von Humboldt's discovery of the key theories of social geography, I will claim that Byron participated in the concurrent, pan-European development of these ideas across multiple disciplines. This will permit a historicized use of the post-equilibrium ecology of C. S. Holling and Lance Gunderson's Panarchy and Murray Bookchin's social ecology as the descendants of Byron and Humboldt's ideas. These theories will help me explain the way Byron understands geographical place as a flow of energy produced by co-creative exchanges between interdependent beings and their material surroundings.

As a result of the increasing diversity and complexity of relationships, the flow of energy periodically climaxes in great cultural flowerings, such as what occurred in ancient Greece, Rome, Persia, Egypt, and so forth. The metabolic interactions that channel a specific ecosystem's energy from the

soil, sun, and water through flora and fauna to social institutions, music, art, literature, and architecture depend on delicate reciprocal relations that are easily destroyed by one individual or group of individuals trying to control the spontaneous, co-creative energy flow for their own selfish benefit. The landscapes of fallen civilizations reveal cultural collapse as a threat to ecosystem functioning.

However, Byron also saw that these landscapes still retain the potential that made the ancient civilizations great. The energy that flowered in ancient Greece has not disappeared, just devolved back into nonhuman networks. Byron hoped that collaboration between philhellenes and local Greeks could trigger a renewal of spontaneous, open, reciprocal relationships across the cultural ecosystem. He further hoped that a Greek renaissance could inspire the rest of Europe to understand the way tyranny in present-day relationships threatens the fragile structures of human prosperity.

Sustained prosperity, in ancient Greece no less than in modern Europe, depends on a free flow of energy between complex networks of reciprocating relationships across human and nonhuman lives at multiple scales. An ethics of reciprocity and mutual care is thus a key outcome to Byron's vision of cultural ecology. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how Byron's cultural ecology has a legacy in the Elgin Marbles controversy, spawning the vitalist theory that cultural artifacts are an integral part of national identity, which continues to shape international antiquities policy.

In Chap. 3, I describe the way Cantos III and IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* show a significant advance of Byron's theory of cultural ecology. Travelling through the ruined landscapes of post-Waterloo Europe and burdened by his own existential crisis, Byron experimented with a Wordsworthian natural theology. Yet the Swiss Alps did not disclose "something far more deeply interfused" that could provide a permanent footing for rebuilding his identity; instead, they suggested that nature followed an endless cycle of destruction and rebirth that had no apparent purpose or goal. Nature's cycles were simply on a grander scale and timeframe compared to human history—a difference of degree, not kind. Canto III ends with the hope that human civilization and creative genius can be redemptive in a way that nature has failed to be.

Canto IV experiments with an aesthetic theology, the antithesis of Canto III's natural theology. In encounters with the artifacts of human genius, seemingly created *ex nihilo*, Byron considered whether human creativity provided a permanent source of meaning and purpose on which

he could build his sense of belonging. Perhaps he *was* the poet of his own dark mind, liberated from earthbound connections to dwell in the ethereal world of self-generated genius. Yet this possibility conflicted with his awareness, evident throughout both cantos' bioregional descriptions of urban and rural places, that nature and civilization are intertwined in co-creative evolution.

Neither Canto III's nature theology nor Canto IV's aesthetic theology offers a stable place of belonging; instead, their dialectical interaction reaffirms insights from Canto II about the dynamic process of translocal belonging, symbolized in the ocean, which unites the Euro-Mediterranean bioregion through natural, political, economic, social, technological, and cultural networks that shape daily routines. This transcontinental watershed aesthetic contrasts with the more localist watershed aesthetic that, according to Jonathan Bate, Wordsworth developed in his *River Duddon* sonnet sequence, *Guide to the Lakes*, and the *Prelude* (2000, 224–226).

Instead of a small, tribal Republic of Freeholders bound together by their “roots” in the Lake District watershed, Byron showed that a transnational solidarity could be built on perceptions of the shared fragility of the entangled “routes” on which ecosystem and livelihood flourishing depends within a global watershed.⁵³ Using the ocean to imagine a global watershed, Byron identified as a world citizen, conscious of the fragile relations that sustained him and the rest of the world.

In Chap. 4, I consider Byron's turn from *Childe Harold's* building and dwelling exercises to experiment with ontological and epistemological systems in his three metaphysical dramas, *Manfred*, *Cain*, and *Heaven and Earth*. Drawing on Murray Bookchin's social ecology, Val Plumwood's eco-feminism, Donna Haraway's post-humanism, and feminist social geography and political science, I argue that each of the three plays investigates the effects of a hierarchical logic of domination on characters facing existential crisis.

Manfred's quest for forgetfulness and forgiveness is conditioned by his belief that his physical body degrades and imprisons his immortal spirit. Over the course of the play, he discovers that his strength comes from the interdependency of body and spirit.

Cain's dissatisfaction with his family's humble acceptance of things as they are is also conditioned by his belief that his spirit has been trapped in a body and in circumstances not of his own making. His exposure to extinction theory shows him that the world is actually more open, fluid, and nonteleological than he had believed. Ironically, his attempt to institute a

nonhierarchical, natural order in his society leads him to kill his brother, repeating God's act of violent domination and division into hierarchy.

Heaven and Earth shows a world that has followed God's commandment to be fruitful and multiply, leading to miscegenation and hybridity that both violate God's hierarchical vision of order and eliminates the need for God to sustain the reproductive process. Japhet questions God's flood as a tyrannical act designed to reduce earth's diverse and interconnected life to single pairings of selected genotypes, but he also celebrates the self-determining freedom in nature's fecund diversity.

At the end of all three plays, hierarchical structures are revealed to be arbitrary impositions by a will to domination which is antithetical to the spontaneous creative freedom necessary for a thriving existence.

Byron's experiments with belonging in *Childe Harold* and ontological speculation in the metaphysical plays fostered a maturation of ecological thought that manifested in *Don Juan* as an eco-cosmopolitan vision of what Evan Gottlieb and Juliet Shields have called "global flow dynamics in capital, colonialism, travel, trade, migration, war, and cultural exchange" (2013, 8), the topic I take up in Chap. 5.

Drawing on Bruno Latour's political ecology, panarchy, Bookchin's social ecology, and the philosophy of new materialism and post-humanism, I examine the way that Byron sees society in global terms by taking *Don Juan* through various states of society in a nonlinear, nonhierarchical way.⁵⁴

The poem uses cultural ecology to challenge the centralizing narratives of Malthusian political economy and London's post-Waterloo hegemonic reordering of the globe. The eco-cosmopolitanism that Byron develops in this poem provides a mode for thinking about environmental affiliations and allegiances beyond the local and national: it provides the basis for caring about individual places in their specificity, but also for caring about the whole network of networks, a universal benevolence counter to political economy's insistence on self-interest (Heise 2008, 20–21).

Don Juan is well known for making unusual juxtapositions, associations, and comparisons—the poem's odd assemblages of loosely affiliated subjects, genres, tropes, ideas, and languages disrupt hierarchies and the assumed order of things, performing the idea that reality is made up of heterogeneous networks. Byron's "art of apposition" thrives in linguistic and formal "contact zones," where spontaneous hybrids evolve most readily.

Likewise, Byron places *Don Juan* in cultural "contact zones," where his "mobilité" creatively disrupts orderly borders. Thus, in poetic form and

content, Byron experimented with a radical ecological theory: that the world is one massive contact zone, an “ecotone” of enormous biocultural diversity, where things mix and mingle across permeable borders in creative cross-fertilizations that are often conflictual and asymmetrical.⁵⁵

Don Juan is said to have mastered “The art of living in all climes with ease” (*Don Juan*, Canto XV, 88); Byron’s ecotone poetics shows how that mastery means being able to thrive in the intensely creative, diversifying conflict of porous, dynamic, negotiable borders, whether linguistic, cultural or ecological. “Life flourishes at the edge of chaos.”

Byron’s ecological imagination is rich, complex, and cosmopolitan in scale. His major work shows that, over his lifetime, he consistently acknowledged the world as an interconnected network of networks, and understood the shared fragility of those networks. While Byron’s poetry does not yield the same vision of interconnectedness that Wordsworth’s poetry does—a rich, detailed mimesis of the interdependencies within a small-scale, rural bioregion—it does reveal large-scale interdependencies between urban and rural geographies, human-built and natural environments, and the Euro-Mediterranean watershed.

Unlike Wordsworth’s harmonious, nurturing nature, Byron’s nature suggested the dynamic creativity inherent within the contested spaces between different assemblages that are asymmetrically interdependent. His sense of planet comprised an eco-cosmopolitanism that set the tone for a critique of the de-territorializing incursions of aggressive global capitalism and the beginnings of a globalized ethic of care. If we can trace eco-cosmopolitanism to the Romantic period when global capitalism, colonialism, and imperial state power first organizing concerted strategies of de-territorialization and displacement to achieve global dominance, then not only can we develop a more inclusive history of how Romantics addressed environmental threat, we may also find imaginative resources in Romanticism for effectively resisting subjugation to today’s continued threats of capitalism and imperial power.

NOTES

1. Bowles wrote this passage for his 1806 *Works of Alexander Pope*.
2. James Chandler (1984) has stated that “many participants in the debate, on both sides, saw that Bowles’ principles resembled those by which poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge defended their own poetry. We think of such principles, ourselves, I believe, as central to the poetics of high English

- Romanticism,” 497–498. Anthony Howe (2013) has shown how Byron’s “Letter” identified the parallel between Bowles’ “cant poetical” and the “cant political” of post-Waterloo reactionary governments, 77–98. See also Stabler’s (2002) discussion of the “Letter,” 95–104.
3. Oeschlaeger (1991) cast the Romantic “return to nature” as a revolution against Enlightenment thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Rene Descartes, and others, who idealized science and reason as human tools for subduing nature in order to create a New Jerusalem, a specifically urban paradise, 110–125.
 4. Haraway (2008) has fused Mary Louise Pratt’s “contact zone” theory with ecology’s theory of “ecotones,” those places where the edges of ecosystems connect, pointing out that ecotones “are the richest places to look for ecological, evolutionary, and historical diversity [...] contact zones are where the action is, and current interactions change interactions to follow,” 216–220. See also Mary Louise Pratt (2007, 6–7).
 5. Mario Lupak (1999) has made a claim for Byron’s lifelong nature philosophy, but I find it unconvincing because he measures Byron’s nature against Romanticism’s transcendental nature.
 6. Marjorie Levinson (2012) has acknowledged this repetition when she writes that “Jerome McGann seceded from that visionary company [of Frye, Abrams, Bloom, de Man, Erdman and Hartman] when he made Byron the subject of his first book, reflecting on Byron’s fate in the postwar academy and on *Don Juan* in particular, 358. See McGann’s polemical opposition to the “visionary company,” (1983, 21–31). See also Stephen Cheeke’s critique of New Historicism’s attack on Romantic nature (2003, 9).
 7. This is not mere coincidence, as many scholars have demonstrated. See Jonathan Bate (2000, 12–37), Lawrence Buell (2005, 3–6), Kate Rigby (2004, 1–6), Greg Garrard (1996, 452), Onno Oerlemans (2004, 3–5), James Chandler (1998, 6–20), Orrin Wang (2011, 6–7), Scott Hess (2012, 4–5).
 8. I follow Chandler’s claim that New Historicism repeats Romanticism’s turn to history (1998, 4–6). Dalia Nassar (2014) has demonstrated that Romanticism’s central metaphysical question about the nature of nature must also, necessarily, be an epistemological question (1–5); see also Terry Gifford (1995, 5–6).
 9. Hartman’s critique is cited in Abrams (1971, 20).
 10. In *Don Juan in Context*, McGann celebrated Byron’s contextualizing methodology.
 11. In this section, Wang asserted that Byron fit a cultural studies framework because he practiced “thick description,” a trademark of cultural studies. Conversely, Onno Oerlemans, Kate Rigby, Lawrence Buell, Jane Bennett, James McKusick, and Bruno Latour all claimed “thick description” as

- ecocriticism's trademark. Cultural studies and ecocriticism are methodologically more similar than either school has acknowledged, a point Kevin Hutchings (2009) has made, 13–18.
12. Helena Feder (2002) calls this a “strange” opposition in “Ecocriticism, New Historicism, and Romantic Apostrophe,” and cautions ecocritics to be careful of what they wish for, because, by “simply celebrating the move from red to green in Romantic studies” a great deal of mutually “useful emphases” will be lost, 44–46.
 13. Other important texts in the founding of British Romantic ecocriticism include the special issue of *Studies in Romanticism* 35:3 (Fall 1996) 355–488 (organized by Bate and including essays by Bate, Lussier, McKusick, Garrard, Pite, and Morton) and a *PMLA* “Forum” in 114.5 (Oct. 1999) 1089–1104 (sponsored by ASLE and more representative of American ecocriticism). Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* is arguably the most important work of American ecocriticism from the 1990s.
 14. Ironically, Bate (1991) excluded all mention of *Natural Supernaturalism*. Although McGann (1983) named Abrams as his target, Bate’s polemical “Introduction” (1991) identified Hartman and Bloom as McGann’s targets. This elision is inexplicable, especially when Abrams is so obviously Bate’s precursor, as Rigby (2004) has pointed out, 2–3.
 15. At the same time Bate fashioned himself as rescuing Wordsworth from unjust ignominy, he also insisted that Wordsworth’s faith in nature was desperately important for Western redemption, a call that resonated with many environmentally aware scholars, me included.
 16. “Thus, one might say that for a neo-Marxist reader in the American academy the end of writing is to make political marginalization endurable and to set theoretical cats among establishment pigeons in enjoyable ways” (Bate 1991, 4). Later (1993), Bate wrote “from here, one does not have to make a very large jump to the supposition that the ultimate goal was a critique of Ronald Reagan’s America,” 159. Karl Kroeber (1994) recast this sentiment when he speculated that “the increasing self-isolation of criticism within narrow ideological/metaphysical concerns appeared to be a defensive manoeuvre to protect critics from taking up practical social responsibilities,” 20. As Lawrence Buell (2005) has noted, “first wave ecocritics” prided themselves on their “critical activism,” 6–7, in contrast to New Historicism and post-structuralism.
 17. Buell (2005) identified this way of framing a return to nature as “suspiciously neo-Victorian,” 2.
 18. Later (2000), Bate stated that “Romantics believed that the country is where the heart has better soil,” 12. As I shall explain in more detail, the Romantic return to nature is more properly a drive to reconnect with an intimate natural locale; thus, the sense of place is a dominant trope.

Wordsworth's return to a specific place with a specifically rural subsistence lifeway is paradigmatic.

19. As Lawrence Buell (2005) speculates, ecocriticism "testifies to the need to correct somehow against the marginalization of environmental issues in most versions of critical theory that dominated literary and cultural studies through the 1980s—even as 'the environment' was becoming an increasingly salient public concern and major topic of research," 3.
20. As Helena Feder (2002) so accurately has noted, "Kroeber and Bate never quite succeed in extricating themselves from the mind-set of antagonism and oppositionalism," 45. Rigby (2004) also described the way Bate's first book reversed the Wordsworth–Byron opposition established by McGann, 2.
21. Heise (2008) has critiqued the blindnesses on both sides, 43–51. As astute as is Wang's (2011) analysis of binaries perpetuated in Romantic criticism, he overlooks the nonhuman world's position in commodification and political economy: his list of Romanticism's key terms are "periodicity, revolution, commodification, materiality, and ideology," but not the equally important and pervasive Romantic tropes of nature and place-making, which I take as evidence of how polarized post-structuralism and ecocriticism have been, 1–13. This is not just to say that nature is simply the condition of possibility for capitalist processes, but, following Kate Rigby (2004), that New Historicism perpetuates the Cartesian break with nature, ignoring the climate and other aspects of the nonhuman as co-determinants of human activity, 4. Weaving ecological analysis into commodity analysis would yield more insights into what Wang has claimed is the unfinished history of Romanticism.
22. Even as Jonathan Bate (2000) used Michael Serres' argument from *The Natural Contract* to define the analytic categories he applies to Wordsworth, he acknowledged that the line of influence is actually reversed, from Wordsworth to Serres, thus establishing something of a tautology, 99–104.
23. Ralph Pite (1996) made a similar claim about the British, 357. Greg Garrard (2012) characterized the early ecocriticism as focused on wilderness and nature writing, 4–5. Likewise, Kate Rigby (2004) described ecocriticism "reading along the grain" of Romantic nature, 2. Although Buell's wave narrative is not credible, even early social constructionist ecocritics, like Terry Gifford (1995) turn away from what is characterized as the abstraction of post-structuralism to the "green" outside his window, 13–18.
24. Jonathan Bate (1991) and Stephen Gill (1998) discussed the way Wordsworth influenced the creation of the National Trust Park System.
25. Greg Garrard (2012) described Deep Ecology as the "explicit or implicit perspective of ecocritics," 23; see also Heise (2008, 34).

26. Bate (1991, 2000) also employed the social ecology of Theodor Adorno and Raymond Williams, but Heidegger and a Deep Green poetics of reinhabitation dominates. While the poetics of reinhabitation also dominated McKusick's (2000) assessment of Green Romanticism, he also broadened his scope to include the Romantic visions of ecotopia and apocalyptic ecocide in his chapter on Blake and Mary Shelley, 95–111.
27. For Oerlemans, localism is not a prerequisite for noticing particularity, as his chapter on travel literature demonstrated. Buell (2001) discussed the three imaginative steps necessary to create connectedness to places: bonding, telling, and understanding, 17. He writes that identity is formed in a transaction with the environments central to one's personal and social identity, a formula that is essential for theorizing translocal place attachments that lead to ecologically conscious practices of dwelling, 18.
28. Gary Snyder (1990), 25–47, and Wendell Berry (1992, 1993), 25–43, two very influential, American environmentalist philosophers of the twentieth century, both emphasize long-term residence as a pre-requisite for environmental consciousness.
29. Academic discussions have been influenced by David Harvey's work; see Buell (2001, 64).
30. Heise (2008) argued that place is the most important category through which environmentalism has articulated what it means to be environmentally aware, 29–32. Buell (2005) argued that setting became the most important of the four Aristotelian literary themes for the ecocritical turn, 3–5.
31. Garrard (1996), who has written that ecocriticism shows how nature poetry puts the question of belonging at the root of human experience, 456. Cheeke's study is squarely social geography; he is interested in mapping Byron's spatial understanding of social relations, not his spatial understanding of human–natural relations.
32. See also Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace's "Introduction" (2001), which asserts the ecocritical commonplace that the natural environment is always the shaping force of individual and group identity, and then goes on to assert that there is a connection between the lack of grounding in a physical place and the experience of misunderstanding, objectification, and alienation that individuals and groups experience in the modern, capitalist world, 7–8.
33. Nichols (2011) does not use "dwelling," preferring "roosting," but it is obvious that his notion of roosting is connected to Heidegger's dwelling. More recent studies of place have moved away from Heidegger, but retained a complicated relation to lococentrism: see Scott Hess's fusion of historical materialism and ecocriticism (2012), Evan Gottlieb and Juliet Shields's fusion of cultural studies, critical global studies, and ecocriticism (2013), and Stephen Cheeke's fusion of New Historicism and social geography (2003).

34. Although McKusick (2000) rejects the binary oppositions of “city and country, tame and wild, servile and free, civilization and wilderness,” as ideas “grounded in acts of ontological bad faith,” he follows Bate in using local–cosmopolitan and resident–itinerant in his identification of green writers, 6. See his discussion of James Thompson, 23.
35. Compare Buell’s (2001) discussion of “embeddedness,” 14; Cheeke (2003) has discussed “being there” as a rhetorical construction in Romantic, particularly Byron’s, authority claims. For Cheeke, “being there” always references a specific locale, emphasizing the lococriticism of Romantic constructions of place knowledge, 4–6. Romantic ecocriticism repeats the Romantic rhetoric of “being there,” as Tim Morton (2007) has demonstrated, by popularizing prefatory remarks that invoke the critic’s “as I write” situation. The politics of self-location is useful and important for demystifying universalist claims, but Morton argues that localist claims to authoritative knowledge can also become an ecomimetic fetish, 30–48.
36. Gottlieb and Shields (2013) have described the way ecocritics privileged lyric poetry precisely because it was the genre for expressing subjectivity in relation to very particular local places, 11. Greg Garrard (2012) has explained the importance of the pastoral in the emergence of the environmental imagination, 37–53.
37. These examples are from McKusick’s “Introduction,” (2000) where he presented his framing ideas. It is followed by chapters on Coleridge, Wordsworth and Clare. Thereafter, McKusick complicates his model with examinations of Mary Shelley, William Blake, Mary Austen, and John Muir.
38. The rhetoric of “founding fathers” exposes ecocriticism’s myth-making.
39. See Bate (2000), 261, in particular. Ironically, Wordsworth’s wisest environmentally minded characters are all wanderers who never become dwellers in the narrower sense. “Home at Grasmere” (Wordsworth 2000) even acknowledges the Traveler’s unique ability to perceive the truths of the place, 694–709. It is only the city resident who is truly bereft, 807–818.
40. Although I do not have space to elaborate here, “Dwelling in the Fourfold” seems a closer approximation to Wordsworth’s notion of dwelling in *The Excursion*, when he describes the sun, the stars, the fields, the ocean, God and mortals equally comprehensible to all: “The primal duties shine aloft—like stars; / The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless, / Are scattered at the feet of Man—like flowers (Bk. 9. 238–240).
41. This is such an ingrained assumption in the critical tradition that the list of critics would be very long. It includes Robert Gleckner (1967, 229–250), Jerome McGann (1968, 114–118), Ward Pafford (1962, 105–109), Michael Cooke (1969, 39–44), and Vincent Newey’s more interesting exploration (1988, 148–165).

42. Later in her discussion, Rigby seemed to insist that Romantic dwelling must engage a return to natural places rather than human-made places; the action of dwelling happened when Shelley confronted Mont Blanc, or Wordsworth revisited Tintern Abbey, not when Byron was “called” to “track the trace of the holy” in St. Peter’s, the Coliseum, or the Parthenon, 89–90. Lawrence Buell (2001) has offered the concept of “existential embeddedness” as a solution to the problem of equating dwelling with inhabitation. Existential embeddedness applies equally to the inveterate wanderer and American eco-saint, John Muir, and the early practitioner of urban reinhabitation, Jane Addams, 3–20.
43. “As long as the transfer from one level to the other is maintained, the interactions within the levels themselves can be transformed or the variables changed without the whole system losing its integrity. As a consequence, this structure allows wide latitude for experimentation within levels, thereby greatly increasing the speed of evolution,” Gunderson and Holling (2002, 72).
44. Oerlemans (2004) has pointed out that environmental lococentrism routinely fails to understand its own rootedness in the conditions of race, class, gender and other forms of privilege that make ecolocalism possible, 19. Hess (2012) has written that the Wordsworthian nature tradition has shaped environmentalism through the values of white, middle-class, educated, cultural elites, and defines nature as a place for rural recreation apart from daily human interaction and communal life, 3–4. See also Cronon (1996).
45. Felix Guattari (2000) has insisted that the environmentalist strategy of preserving a sense of locality will simply trap individuals more deeply in their subjection to global capitalism; he urges the abandonment of localism for the liberating mobility of transversality, 41–53. Heise’s (2008) arguments against environmentalism’s lococentrism coincide with Guattari’s; however, she proposes that “re-territorialization” can complement eco-cosmopolitanism, 50–67.
46. See also Heise (2008, 6–9), Buell (2001, 64–65), Bate (2000, 224–225), and Wohlgenut (2009, 1).
47. Buell (2001) describes the diasporic geography of belonging as an “archipelagos of locales,” with “tenticular radiations” from each locale, and “open and porous networks of social relationships,” 64–74. He contrasts the diasporic geography with the traditional lococentric system of concentric circles of connectedness, typical of Edmund Burke’s theory of loyalties in *Reflections on the Revolution*.
48. Buell (2001) emphasizes adaptation as the key to inhabitation, 65–66. Solastalgia is Glenn Albrecht’s term for the lived experience of negative environmental change, often traumatic, and usually as a consequence of violent de-territorialization.

49. Heise (2008, 11). Shared fragility is an important concept for inspiring global climate change activism and a rethinking of human security within development and diplomacy frameworks: see Robinson (2011) and Tschakert and Tuana (2013).
50. Heise referred to National Socialism's "blood and soil" localism as an extreme form of environmentalism's chosen defense against violent de-territorialization and global capitalism, 6–7. The fact that Heidegger, ecocriticism's philosophical guide, was implicated with Nazi ecology, suggests that it is important to approach lococentric assumptions in environmentalism and ecocriticism with care.
51. This argument should not be seen as erasing the different levels of vulnerability, exposure, and hazard in different ecosystems, nor the responsibility that people living with less risk have for ensuring that their actions do not raise risk levels for other ecosystems and peoples. See Francis' (2009) discussion of reciprocity as an environmental ethic, 1007–1014.
52. Wohlgemut (2009) proposed that Byron display a form of universal benevolence in his "discrepant cosmopolitanism," 101–103. My analysis invokes theories elaborated by Rigby (2004, 85–86) and Buell (2001, 68–84).
53. I am extrapolating from James Clifford's suggestive distinction between the two opposing ways of imagining place-based identity and belonging: the traditional "roots" and the diasporic "routes"; cited in Heise (2008, 57).
54. My reading is influenced by Chandler (1998, 380–381).
55. This is the model of the "lump / gap" structure of all scales in a system, from biome to landscape, that Gunderson and Holling (2002) articulate, 77–88.

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<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-54237-9>

Byron's Nature

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Hubbell, J.A.

2018, IX, 289 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-54237-9