

## ENVIRONMENT AS BOREDOM

by JAMES SHERRY

"We cannot live in the country,  
for the country will give us no peace."  
--Sir Walter Raleigh

### *Boredom and Reflection*

To start the juices flowing,  
When the only result is  
What already is,  
Repels. Some post modern poets

Have post-modernly recursive poetics.  
Their writings constantly question  
Their own existence unproductively,  
Negating each sally like overripe bureaucrats.

The lineage of guilt in poetry,  
The critique of industry while reaping its sheaves,  
Embraces obedient naturalism that will not support  
All of the people together, and neither will love.

What you don't know sneaks up on you,  
Nourished on the club sandwich of consciousness,  
Emerging as the next end-to-end planetary hegemony  
Parallelizing the human / natural geometry.

But in whose self-interest?  
And what is self-interest?  
A working link of plastic arts and orgasm?  
The final sounding of the whale?

## National Public Poem

Watching Canada geese flying around the valley,  
They sit on the pond chatting, then take flight.  
What are they cackling? "Watch that wingtip,  
Get your beak out of my butt." Then they

Realign on the pond, on the field.  
I notice bands on some  
Around their legs; they are sending  
Radio waves to biologists

Far away. It must make them fly funny  
To have those metal appurtenances on,  
Like poets: funny  
But still sending out signals:

## Boredom and Reflection Continued

Fussy attention to complete details,  
The lower castes of human ingenuity,  
A bathic metal, reused and used to it.  
Expecting contradictions:

Goal-ist revelry excited my atoms,  
Intentional progress deified. But what  
Moves on? Not new parts, only combinations.  
Not neologisms but recycled phrases.

Hurting animals hurts people, but fur is renewable.  
Conflict makes up the social body  
Where aggressive thought is questioned  
And the common lot fits the global cycle?

For the artist, it's still life. And only  
Special features explode within its ken.  
The only special species is starting  
To question itself anew.

Ron Silliman asked how seriously I take  
These environmental niches. I can very  
Or not:

I have no fixed intentional value;  
Irony is intention *and* perception.

Irony versus ontology: looking hard at connective facts undercuts irony, avoiding its glancing  
blow. Biology

In the spectrum of intention  
Nature is very much too much.  
How can I answer seriously when I am  
Constantly changing my mind?

But for many readers the compact  
Must be stated or made transparent  
So the reader doesn't feel betrayed  
And reject play between intention and expectation.

How would society appear after  
An environmental renaissance,  
Where human boundaries become more  
Permeable, without losing ourselves?

So who is left my randy friends,  
And how do they relate?  
The new caste casts the old one out  
Their functions don't abate.

## Boredom and Power

Nature study is boring.  
Even these lines might be excited only by technique.  
Nature accepts repetition where human arts  
Require perfecting

Nature study is boring.  
The trees grow. So?  
After a few lines of Darwin,  
The godly fear of him appears unjustified.

“Certainly no clear line  
Of demarcation has yet been  
Drawn between species and  
Sub-species—that is, the forms...

or

“The term variety, again, in  
Comparison with mere individual  
Differences, is also arbitrarily applied,  
For convenience’ sake...

or

“Finally, varieties cannot be distinguished  
From species.—except first, by the discovery  
Of intermediate linking forms; and secondly,  
By a certain indefinite amount of difference between them;...”

How many dark plans have been hatched over such vagueness?  
Would art or religion be so indistinct and rigorous?  
Abnegating power has been tried before and failed.  
Is uncertainty the revolutionary force we are seeking?

Are Darwin’s unpredictable definitions a threat to power?  
Must people be crushed who pose such questions?  
Is nature’s diverse way the answer,  
Or a special human skill efficiently applied?

"Rarity, as geology tells us,  
Is the precursor to extinction."  
To the extent we can transfer biology  
To society, efficiency is often not sustainable.

Repetition is Nature's way of securing the future.  
The complexity of phenomena promotes scalar repetition.  
Each argument comes back again as in Vico's sutures.  
Darwin is effective because he questions himself.

In Darwin's natural selection, the individual must maximize Reproductive efficacy for species survival,  
but what he describes  
As a key objection to his theory, sterile or neuter insects,  
Supports this book's key thesis: the social construction of nature.

"I have now explained how, as I believe, the wonderful fact of two distinctly defined castes of sterile workers existing in the same nest, both widely different from each other and from their parents, has originated. We can see how useful their production may have been to a *social community* (italics mine) of ants, on the same principle that the division of labour is useful to civilised man." (p358)

Mediating between scientific objectivity and the recognition  
Of a personal and class bias, my work is never entirely free  
Of argument, even though it has that goal  
Of presenting the environment as culture, but free of it.

Applied to political conflicts, such as the Middle East (2006),  
Biology encourages conflict:  
"The forms which stand the closest competition with those  
Undergoing modification and improvement will naturally suffer most."

Applied to conflicts in local politics in 2007:  
"...We see in man's productions the action of what  
May be called the principle of divergence, causing differences,  
At first barely appreciable, steadily to increase, and the breeds  
To diverge in character, both from each other and the common parent."

As an argument for environmental politics:

“But how, it may be asked, can any analogous principle apply in nature?

...that the more diversified the descendants from any one species become in structure, constitution, and habits, by so much will they be better enabled to seize on many and widely diversified places in the *polity of nature*, (italics mine)

“And so be enabled to increase in numbers.”

The combination of the resurrection

Of Islam and Israel is (ironically, Ron)

“the truth of the principle that the greatest

Amount of life can be supported by great diversification of structure....”

“Amount”

Is Romantic in use but refers to the same in Darwin as in the newspaper, Suffering aside.

The contemporary poet and the farmer are linked through nature. “Farmers find that they Can raise most food by a rotation of plants belonging to the most different orders:” And Diversity is not just native, non-immigrant, “for out of the 162 naturalized genera (of Plants in America), no less than 100 genera are not there indigenous.” (1859) This remark is relevant also to global climate change in that while we think of it associated with introduction of alien species, even as early as 1859 the America’s was a melting pot of plants.

Does the application of reason make humans less susceptible to the laws of nature and Which ones (of those laws) are thereby circumvented? “A set of animals, with their organization But little diversified, could hardly compete with a set more perfectly diversified in Structure.” So when reasoning, work with what you can do and increase your ability To distinguish differences rather than seeking desired ends: completion, not perfection.

For radical art nature has a special place. “If then, these two varieties be variable, The most divergent of their variations will generally be preserved During the next thousand generations.” Sounds like a Biblical paean To the artist who is willing to continually stretch the absurd.

END of POEM and of citations from Darwin's *Origin of Species*