

writing, which is more often sharply analytical. But there is little doubt that de Bolla is attempting to appropriate various levels of eighteenth-century discourse to the work of writing twentieth-century criticism and theory. The attempt is interesting and the author's control is obvious. If one prefers more restraint, however, or less intrusion of authorial presence, one will be irritated by this book, no matter how instructive one may also find it.

Strangely enough, in a book so conscious of its own status as book, *The Discourse of the Sublime* is not consistently well produced. Physically it is very attractive, with nicely designed pages, clear type, and a provocative jacket illustration (Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Self-portrait Shading the Eyes" [1747]). But the proofreading is careless, the punctuation is eccentric, and once or twice footnotes — thoughtfully (and unusually) situated at the bottom of pages — do not appear in the right places. The book seems the product of both immense energy and undue haste; its strengths and weaknesses are compatible with this judgment. But having said that, I find far more here to admire than to criticize. This is an extraordinarily rich book, full of ideas, ingenuity, and vitality. Informed by recent theory and scholarship in several disciplines, it also reveals familiarity with a wide range of eighteenth-century texts and an audacious, often original intelligence. The result is very demanding and occasionally brash, with more than a hint of the egotistical sublime; but a serious student of the eighteenth century might find it all the more stimulating and provocative for that.

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Carl Woodring. *Nature into Art: Cultural Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989. pp. xvi, 326. \$30.00.

The argument of Carl Woodring's *Nature into Art* is a straightforward and familiar one: that at the start of the nineteenth century nature was exalted as "womb, bosom, lap, mother, and goddess whose temple is the organic world" (11), but by the end of the century art had separated itself from the demands of nature and could confidently assert its autonomy. Wordsworth is Woodring's chief exemplar of the return to nature, Whistler and Wilde the exultant proclaimers of the apotheosis of art. In charting this transformation, Woodring takes us on a dizzying survey of numerous poems, novels, philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic treatises, and paintings, with occasional forays into music, especially opera. The result is often exhilarating, but the book will frustrate those who cannot instantly recall the context of quotations or the precise significance of a lesser-known writer, artist, or work. A sentence like the following is typical: "Turner's *Hannibal*

does not depict a synchronous universe with the orderly ratios of Newton or Kepler, nor Payley's pantry divinely stocked for the needs of the adult male, nor the sacred atmosphere of spirits controlling the cycles of nature as in Poussin's *Orion*, Giordana Bruno, Thomas Burnet, or the uncompromisingly irrational world of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*" (82). The greatest pleasure from Woodring's dense and allusive book is reserved for those who have read literature, looked at pictures, and listened to music with a thorough knowledge of the work on the history of ideas of Lovejoy, Willey, Beach, Abrams, and Peckham, the histories of aesthetics by Gilbert and Kuhn, Beardsley, and Osborne, as well as the more specialized studies of Hipple and Monk, and, for art history and theory, the wide-ranging works of Gombrich.

Woodring observes in his preface that since the transformation of his subtitle was a phenomenon of Europe and America as well as Britain, he will sometimes extend his discussion to include examples from these continents. This produces pointed commentary on Hawthorne, Baudelaire, Delacroix, Flaubert, Caspar Friedrich, Tolstoy, and Zola, and passing references to many others. Chapter 1 is a "flying survey" of the interweavings of nature and art in the early part of the century, but characteristically begins earlier, with the rivalry between city and country depicted on Achilles' shield in Book 18 of the *Iliad*, and on through the more explicit confrontation between nature and art in Shakespeare and Spenser, Montaigne's statement (in Florio's translation) that "there is no reason, art should gaine the point of honour of our great and puissant mother Nature," and the eleven definitions of nature in Johnson's *Dictionary*. Schiller's declaration in *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* that "*because* nature in us has disappeared from humanity we rediscover in her the truth only outside it, in the animate world," which was repeated throughout Europe, is seen as defining the impulses of the romantics. Chapters follow on the shared assumptions early in the century about the Sublime, Picturesque, and Beautiful, about Imagination and Irony, and the Supernatural. Chapters on Realism, the Pre-Raphaelites, Darwin, Doubling and Division, and the Aesthetes (among the best chapters in the book) complete the argument, with the pivotal statement marking the transformation occurring in the chapter on Darwin: "Darwin and Spenser, by removing all likelihood that nature could serve as a model for human conduct, made way for the ascension of art" (200).

Probably the best way to convey the flair and authority of the synthesis offered by Woodring is to sample the array of facts and judgments in one of the more exemplary chapters. In chapter 5, he first notes the coming of realism in the midst of a distaste for surfaces, which persisted among connoisseurs despite the popularity of Hogarth, David Wilkie's preference for line engraving over fashionable media

like mezzotint because it could reproduce the homely detail of his genre scenes, and Bewick's vignettes and tailpieces in his natural history volumes which both anticipated and guided mid-century realism. A brief discussion of wood engravings in magazines like the *Illustrated London News* leads to the neat formulation: "Romantics had rashly delved for power; Victorians would settle for truth" (117). Macready's naturalism on stage in the 1820s, Planché's bringing of historical fidelity to costuming in the London theatre during the same decade, and the move of opera towards dramatic illusion are placed side by side with George Eliot's achievement in *Romola*, in which realistic devices are turned into ethical structures. Before turning to an extended discussion of realism in the major Victorian novelists, in Victorian painting and its relationship to developments in photography, Woodring writes illuminatingly about the way in which radical French theorists helped the English move in the direction they were already heading, which he sees as a long-term phenomenon in the English-speaking world stretching from Voltaire's skepticism to Foucault's fact-free history. Woodring would be the first to admit that others have made many of his points at greater length. Some sixty crowded pages of notes, which often continue the argument not just acknowledge the source of an idea, offer eloquent proof of his wide reading. His achievement is to have brought it all together in so deft and masterful a way, and with so many fresh quotations.

With so much to be thankful for, it may be ungracious to carp at a couple of things which are inclined to irritate. Woodring can often be witty, but there are a few too many sentences like this one: "Nature stumbled before Darwin sent it sprawling" (178). Also, his list-making, although it can be challenging, can sometimes be less than helpful. For example, we are told starkly that "The experiments of John Robert Cozens (1752-1797) overcame the linearity of Francis Towne (1752-1799) for the progressively light-splashed spontaneity of Paul Sandby (1725-1809), Thomas Girtin (1775-1802), Richard Parkes Bonington (1801-1828) in France, John Sell Cotman (1782-1842) of Norwich, and Turner" (15). Only Turner is mentioned elsewhere in the book. Perhaps it scarcely needs saying that this is traditional intellectual history. Woodring is not overly concerned with revisionist history, though he admits many recent titles into his notes. But we know where he stands: "My sense of the Victorians was formed, without substantial later change, by J. H. Buckley's *The Victorian Temper* and G.M. Young's *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*" (xi), he admits disarmingly in his preface. All the same, it isn't reassuring to read in the chapter on the Aesthetes about Havelock Ellis's forays "into forbidden lands of sex," as if Foucault's "We 'Other Victorians'" had never been written.