

Susan E. Lorsch, Where Nature Ends. Literary Responses to the Designification of Landscape. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983. 175 pp. \$22.50.

Lorsch's title is taken from Matthew Arnold's sonnet "In Harmony with Nature": "Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends; / Nature and man can never be fast friends" (12-13). Traditionally, man is considered to have an immortal soul, a principle of unity ("logos," if you will) whose sustaining and completing power is a sanctifying participatory mystique in crucial relationship with the historicized Word, Jesus Christ. In this light, each man's destiny is supernatural. To live according to sense data alone, to be exclusively sensate (St. Paul's sarkic man), is to be severed from the spiritually invigorating order of grace. The psychological malaise concomitant to such gracelessness is described by Sartre in La Nausée. The shipwrecked soul has to suffer the added indignity of being seasick in the water which threatens to engulf the self.

Implied, then, in Arnold's words is the concept of Jesus Christ as Logos. Jews so inclined and Protestants of the left-wing inner-light afflatus (the "pure of heart," Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode," 59) habitually approach Nature (I shall capitalize it as a conceptual entity) as though it were a "tautegorical" (Coleridge, The Statesman's Manual) burning bush. In Aristotelian terms, "nothing" (tantamount to Sartre's le néant, "non-being," "nothingness") is the material cause of the universe (Nature): but God is not so much the efficient cause (the Maker) as the formal cause (Nature's essence), the Abyss, the Fountain of Forms. Such "apocalyptic intensity" (my phrase) is pretty much the epistemological basis for English Romanticism of the Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Tennyson stripe. (Today's Deconstructionists are heavily tied in with the Kantian skepticism inherent in all this.) Hence, speaking through Teufelsdröckh, whose name, Devil's-Dung, suggests that matter properly viewed is so much evil fertilizer that promotes the growth of visionary rapports, Carlyle writes about "Nature, which is the Time-venture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides him from the foolish" (Sartor Resartus, vol. 1, p. 210; cited by Lorsch, p. 20). Here is the story of the emperor's new clothes with an Illuminist twist. For Tennyson, the material world betokens division from God (existence is the villain): "Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb, / Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?" ("The Higher Pantheism," 5-6). Since the proponents of the Reformation effectively denied the divinely appointed teaching authority of the Magisterium, other avenues of knowledge (gnosis; Kant's Vernunft, a Teutonic version of the discarnate Logos; Fichte's ego positing itself in reality; and the like) had to be pursued, and we have a melange of them in Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode. Indeed, from