

Ron Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque: British Art, Poetry, and Instruments 1750-1830*
 (Bucknell Univ. Pr. 2008) 236+ \$50.00
 A Review by Markus Poczsch
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Ron Broglio's *Technologies of the Picturesque* examines the effects of Romantic-era technology and aesthetics on representations of the natural world, drawing particular attention to the epistemological and ontological problems caused by transformations of three-dimensional space into a series of intelligible signs on flat surfaces. The book thus foregrounds a critique not only of the picturesque habit of knowing and feeling "through the eyes" but also of prevailing notions of Romantic subjectivity that privilege interiority and disconnection from the environment. In its delineation of the "optical hegemony" of the picturesque, *Technologies of the Picturesque* expands upon the work of Christopher Hussey, Richard Sha and Jacques-Labbe by developing analyses of 18th century tool use in cartography, meteorology, animal breeding and medicine. The more radical and compelling engagement, however, is with the anthropocentric model of subjectivity that emerges out of the picturesque and continues, according to Broglio, to inform (and delimit) the discourse of Green Romanticism. In its tentative advancement of an alternate model of Romantic subjectivity, one grounded in a relationship of contact with natural others and otherness where human touch and/or perspective is neither central nor determining, *Technologies of the Picturesque* opens a theoretical space that precludes political and eco-critical appropriation.

Re-imagining Hedgger's notion of "the fourfold"—meaning those elements of nature brought together by human building and dwelling—Broglio's text examines the impact of picturesque inscription and mapping technologies on water, earth, sky and animals. Focusing on each of these elements, the book explores how Romantic technology makes sense of them as "things in nature" and how nature at times resists such appropriations. The first chapter, "Longitude and the Inward Turn," is devoted to 18th century mapping of water, emphasizing the contest between the astronomer, Nevil Maskelyne, and the clockmaker, John Harrison, to calculate longitude at sea. According to Broglio, the victory of Harrison and his clock signals a definitive shift in spatial mapping from a human reliance on natural objects to a dependence on instruments of orientation. This shift or "inward turn" also extends to aesthetic representations of nature and Broglio accordingly ends the chapter by focusing on William Combe's *Tour of Dr. Syntax*, a text that foregrounds the pitfalls of seeing represented nature before the real. While the specific focus on aquatic space is lost in this discussion, Broglio's discussion of the picturesque frame and its syntactical impositions on the "natural" is compellingly set forth.

In dealing with the second of his four elements, earth, Broglio again begins with scientific technologies of orienta-

tion, in this case the tools of 18th century cartography and their deployment in the National Ordnance Survey of Great Britain, before shifting his analysis to the aesthetics of mapping in an extensive engagement with Wordsworthian constructions of poetic landscape and space. Broglio's capsule history of the National Ordnance Survey adumbrates a series of provocative links between the political project of nation-building, the technologies of surveying and map-making, and the voracious optics of picturesque tourism. Political surveys and aesthetic tourists, according to Broglio, use the same eye to "assault the land and transform it into an observed landscape." Yet if applicable to a picturesque cartographer like Paul Sandby, this argument is less convincing when applied to Wordsworth. Broglio's engagement with Wordsworth is fraught with tensions, caveats and inconsistencies. Wordsworth's works are used, on the one hand, to establish the prevalence of Cartesian perspectivalism and its impact on the optical hegemony of the picturesque, while, on the other hand, registering "a felt relatedness to land" that undermines, or rather, *hampers* the tyranny of the eye. Broglio uses the phrase "a felt relatedness to land" to describe the haptic quality of the "spots of time" in *The Prelude*, their "denaturalization of the dominant way of seeing." Yet while these memories may foreground the momentary entrance of "disorientation" through their reordering of the senses, they are nevertheless characterized by the mature poet as "spots of time"—in other words, as localizations or mappings of temporal space. Thus, if Wordsworth's poetry hints periodically at a de-centering or "radical revision of the human subject," it also re-centers, as Broglio concedes at the conclusion of chapter 4, the desire for "majestic overview[s]," a desire that re-centers the human subject in relation to the world and privileges the power of vision.

Broglio's discussion of sky occupies only one chapter and is focused almost exclusively on John Constable's transpositions of skies into skyscapes. Like Wordsworth, Constable is presented as an artist who struggles in his work against "the representations that arise from technology." Offering a corrective to the idea that the artist relied on the meteorological nomenclature of Luke Howard in the composition of his skyscapes, Broglio suggests that Constable's skies register "the specific difference of each cloud" and thus foreground an awareness of temporality as well as space. Temporality translated as a recognition of height allows one, according to Broglio, to read Constable's clouds as "ecological agents."

The last two chapters of *Technologies of the Picturesque* are given over to a wide-ranging and fascinating discussion of an object of economic, national, aesthetic and medicinal interest. Beginning with the claim that "[o]ne of the

Continuing the contextualization of contemporary racial theory, Chapter 1 examines the debate between the monogenist hypothesis that all peoples share the same human ancestry, and the polygenist hypothesis that humans derive from early modern thought, according to which "race" is used to taxonomize all objects and organisms, in which "race" is phasing differences in physical appearance (14); and the essentialist or "quasi-Platonic" approach according to which these apparent differences in physical form were attributed to the existence of permanent and unchanging human "types" or "species" (14-15).

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A Review by Kevin Hutchings
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most neglected appropriations of the picturesque is the means by which animals are fashioned for humans," Broglio offers a history of selective breeding practices and of the gradual aestheticization of English cattle. Aestheticization in this context has various and often conflicting aims. As Broglio suggests, cattle portraiture in the late 18th century established ideal breeding characteristics, promoted particular breeds for advertising and supplemented written records of lineages and pedigrees. By the early 19th century, however, the debate around Edward Jenner's use of cowpox to treat smallpox in human beings prompted illustrations that preyed on the fear that an exchange of fluids with animals would introduce untold pestilence into the human body and, worse yet, the possibility of human-cattle offspring. Broglio uses this historical debate to suggest that contact with animals—a habitic relationship—reveals "the limits of human knowledge and culture" and that those limits offer possibilities for rethinking not only the animal body but also the inherent animality of humans as subjects. Broglio himself

reveals considerable uneasiness about embracing the limits of human knowledge about animals. Indeed, even as he invites the reader to conceive of the animal body "as something other than an object entrained by human desires," he proposes that "[t]he challenge for eco-criticism as for philosophy is to find means of understanding this other world—in other words, to re-entram it by the human desire for understanding."

Technologies of the Virtuousque foregrounds the great difficulty of de-centering the human subject and moving beyond the epistemological and critical frames that ensure inferiority and distance from the exterior world. Nevertheless, by raising these questions and confronting Green Romanicism with the challenge of redefining itself as one of "the multiple centers of the many 'eyes' out 'there,'" Broglio's text articulates significant redirections for the field of ecocriticism as a whole.

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Why 1972? Why the delay in introducing reviews? However criticism and scholarship flourished at the time, reviewing was and still is, dangerous territory, perilous for a young journal and an inexperienced editor. Many on the advisory board had been victims of slash and burn reviewing by incompetent reviewers and careless editors who assumed that a book came out of typewriter (yes, we used typewriters) and onto the library shelf without anyone's reading it before the reviewer, that authors were

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