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Donate The Books of Henry S. Salt, When I talked with Henry S. Salt last summer and saw his keen eyes looking at me from the vantage point of eighty-six years on the frontiers of human reform, I became conscious that I was in the presence of greatness, that a vast deal of life lay behind so keen an understanding. As I saw behind him a shelf of books all with his name on their backs, I knew that his human sympathy had flowered into warm expression more times than I had dreamed of before. All of us know the excellence of his biography of Thoreau, not surpassed in over forty years; some of us know his dozens of magazine articles about Thoreau; but have any of us realized the range of his work in the past fifty years? That its sheer range may be appreciated, and omitting all of his periodical articles, I have compiled a list of the various editions of Mr. Swan Sonnenschein, Lowery and Co. Place and publisher not indicated. Life of James Thomson "B. Richard Bentley and Son. George Bell and Sons, Ltd. Has Time Refuted or Confirmed Them? Tennyson as a Thinker. New York and London: From same plates as "Great Writers Series" edition, with new title page. The Life of Henry David Thoreau. Percy Bysshe Shelley, Poet and Pioneer: The Song of the Respectables and Other Verses. Labour Press Society, Ltd. A Program of Human Reform. Edited by Henry S. Poems of Animal Life. Percy Bysshe Shelley, Poet and Pioneer. His Life and His Ideals. Logic of Vegetarianism, Essays and Dialogues. New and cheaper edition in "Simple Life Series. Pilgrimages to Snowdon and Scawfell. The Eton Hare Hunt. The Secret of the Reptile House. Snake Feeding at the Zoological Gardens. Place and Publisher not indicated. Some Reasons and Rhymings. George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. Essays by Various Writers. Salt, with preface by Bernard Shaw. Seventy Years Among Savages. Harcourt Brace and Company. The Call of the Wildflower. On Cambrian and Cumbrian Hills: The Story of Dido and Aeneas: Translated by Henry S. Our Vanishing Wildflowers and Other Essays. Afterword by Sir M. Memories of Bygone Eton. Allen and Unwin, Ltd. A Note on the Text:

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### Chapter 2 : Henry Salt on Shelley: Literary Criticism and Ecological Identity | Romantic Circles

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Henry Salt on Shelley: Eliot and others felled trees over Shelleyan paths it would take years to clear. Of the nearly forty books Salt wrote, a handful announce themselves as specifically about Shelley: Some of this material became part of the often-reprinted Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer, which Salt would supplement in later pamphlets like Shelley as a Pioneer of Humanitarianism. Sent back to England to be educated at Eton years later his friend G. From to he returned to Eton in the position of a junior Master, and seemed to have a long and comfortable career ahead of him as a respectable scholar, being waited on in his rooms by many servants and expected to join his fellows at table for a daily feast of beef and other, more exotic meats. But by age 33 he could no longer tolerate the difference between this life and that which was described and imagined in the literature he found increasingly important: At the time Shelley was either read as a maker of wispy, ethereal lyrics about Skylarks and Clouds, or not read at all. Remembering his times at Eton, Salt later wrote that "[w]hen I commended Shelley to my Eton colleagues as not only an Etonian and a great poet, but a thinker and a prophet, I got little support" Memories Never a best-selling author, never in the majority in his opinions, Salt nonetheless was a key organizer and articulate spokesperson for a range of movements collected under the name "humanitarian. More, why we should care about Salt except as a transitional figure: What has emerged in recent years as Ecocriticism is in many ways quite different from what Salt wrote. Though no consensus need exist as to what Ecocriticism precisely means, in practice it includes any number of historical and philosophical approaches which make the implications of "the natural" central to the discussion of a given text. These discussions go on to investigate how these texts participate in proto-ecological discourse about the role and function of humans in the natural world, not merely to test whether a particular work or author is "green" or not, but rather to discern what can be learned through investigating the ideological uses to which "nature" has been employed. In nearly all cases, this work has sought to bring a more embodied sense back to criticism from the solipsism of post-structuralist theory at its most abstruse. In Shelley studies, the work of such Ecocritics as Timothy Morton, Onno Oerlemans, and Jennifer Lokash complicates our understanding of a poet and essayist whose political and philosophical beliefs cannot be extricated from his positions on natural diet and the limits of anthropocentric thought. Genesis of a Radical. Scholars of literature after the Romantic period, such as Gillian Beer, have explored in detail the implications of these debates, providing an historical model for ecologically-minded critics of any era. Salt is a Romantic, in the optimistically generic sense: But it is in his citation of texts from Romantic period that his work maps the active legacy of Romantic texts onto a later stage of evolutionary science. The title comes from a line in ethicist J. The idea of belonging to a family, of recognizing kinship, is deceptively simple but endlessly important to Salt, and appears with increasing devotion throughout his career. Though adoration for domestic animals abounds in this bookâ€”"In the early morning she arrives on my bed, and with a tap of the softest of soft paws upon my face informs me that she is ready to be noticed" 56 â€”there is a difference in kind between what Salt takes from this feelingful contact and the familiar experience that many pet-lovers have had, especially since the Victorians, where their own animal attains a membership status unrelated to that of animals at large. It is surprising that so many persons should not only reject but resent the belief in evolution, in a common origin, which to some of us is the one sure consolation, the gospel of great joy. It is a question not of sentiment but of science; yet, as far as sentiment may be permitted, one would have expected human beings to welcome, not disdain, a theory which relieves them of a churlish isolation in a world of slaves and strangers, and leads them gradually to the true civilization which Shelley was inspired to foretell: Story 69 The lines are from Queen Mab 8: The loss of an ontologically privileged status for humans, the

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collapsing of the Great Chain of Being, is only a problem if one has a low opinion of animals. Sentiment remains, for Salt, also a fortunate elixir, one that promises companionship with agreeable cousins, some of whom are soft and furry. It is not difficult to construct a less advantageous version of nature than this, even if not "red in tooth and claw. Shelley certainly took terror seriously, and for all his serenity Salt elsewhere writes of the violence in nature quite directly. Immediately after quoting the previous lines from Queen Mab, Salt continues: For when the oneness of life shall be recognized, such practices as blood-sports will be not only childish but impossible; vivisection unthinkable; and the butchery of our fellow-animals for food an outgrown absurdity of the past. There is a cave All overgrown with trailing odorous plants [. The wandering voices and the shadows these Of all that man becomes, the mediators Of that best worship, love, by him and us Given and returned, swift shapes and sounds which grow More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind, And veil by veil evil and error fall. Such virtue has the cave and place around. Evil and error, put on through custom, keep us from worship. It is hard to imagine them being very different, though this also demands that we imagine what worship looks like. Is it careful scientific study, like Linnean taxonomy? The writing of poetry? It seems to be some mindful combination of all of these. The list of abuses at the end of the Salt quotation—"vivisection, blood-sports, and butchery"—were causes which he knew would not be won overnight, yet the Shelleyan model gave him a rhetoric of hope. In the place of an automatically available, consumerist identity, Thomashow proposes a challenging path towards what he calls "Ecological Identity. To have an identity crisis is to be lost in the world, lacking the ability temporarily, one hopes to connect the self to meaningful objects, people, or ideas—the typical sources of identification. Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification. This can entail considerable ambiguity. After all, the nature we are referring to is a social construction, a human concept, varying from culture to culture and person to person. The historical intersection of T. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Eliot distinguished three stages in the development of taste in poetry. The first is shared by "the majority of children," up to age twelve or so. Eliot does not name any poets in this category; presumably he means the enjoyment of nursery rhymes and poetic rhythm. The third stage, from which he now speaks, is where "identity" becomes a negative term: The third, or mature stage of enjoyment of poetry, comes when we cease to identify ourselves with the poet we happen to be reading; when our critical faculties remain awake; when we are aware of what one poet can be expected to give and what he cannot. The poem has its own existence, apart from us; it was there before us and will endure after us. It is only at this stage that the reader is prepared to distinguish between degrees of greatness in poetry[. Reading a poem, in this view, is like looking at a landscape, which one visits on expert advice. Of course, we change our surroundings and are changed by them; poems, I would argue, operate on the mind in a similar way: If we were objective, then the experience could hardly seem to matter, would touch us only on the surface or not at all. Our individual self, salient though we might imagine it to be, witnesses the external reality of the poem; if great, the old poem "shall endure after us," not unlike we hope the cycles of nature will. The best and clearest Ecocriticism attempts to reverse this trend. For example, Jonathan Bate begins his *Romantic Ecology: The notes to Queen Mab* express, it is true, only the views of an intelligent and enthusiastic schoolboy, but a schoolboy who knows how to write; and throughout his work, which is of no small bulk for a short life, he does not, I think, let us forget that he took his ideas seriously. The ideas of Shelley seem to me always to be the ideas of adolescence—as there is every reason why they should be. And an enthusiasm for Shelley seems to me also to be an affair of adolescence: I confess that I never open the volume of his poems simply because I want to read poetry, but only with some special reason for reference. I find his ideas repellent; and the difficulty of separating Shelley from his ideas and beliefs is still greater than with Wordsworth. Vegetarianism is named, however, and its connotations of "adolescence" continue to have cultural currency. The book Salt was preparing would be his last, and in the title *The Creed of Kinship* he compressed the themes of his life and work into a succinct principle of the oneness of life. It is a short and strange autobiography, for his life story is told through the

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causes he worked for, the friends some of them famous who enriched his life, and the writers from Lucretius to Shaw who had been his intellectual company. All of this is developed without any personal details about his marriage, childhood, or other matters which have since become the core of modern memoir. The book deserves a wider audience: Whenever he speaks of animals, it is with an instinctive, childlike, and perfectly natural sense of kinship and brotherhood. Thus in *Alastor*, in the invocation of Nature [lines ], we find him saying: Salt does not present an angelic Shelley, altogether lyrical and impractical, "not one of us"; but rather a poet who has anticipated issues which will remain challenging and controversial long after immediate concerns have been resolved. It is the kind of book that can be replaced by studies which examine the same passages in far more detail: Salt, however, is up to something else, and his concerns went underground, in a sense, until the recent development of franker versions of autobiographical criticism. Whether breathless or not, the attitudes described above by Salt have become fairly mainstream, and to the growing number of urbane new vegetarian readers the "ridicule" experienced by Salt in his time might seem surprising. This is where what Carol J. Adams has called "the sexual politics of meat" bears on the history of responses to Shelley: People with power have always eaten meat. The aristocracy of Europe consumed large courses filled with every kind of meat while the laborer consumed the complex carbohydrates. Dietary habits proclaim class distinctions, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well. Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinctions with an added twist: Still less is it that Shelley is deliberately making use of his poetic gifts to propagate a doctrine; for Dante and Lucretius did the same thing. I suggest that the position is somewhat as follows. When it is one which the reader rejects as childish or feeble, it may, for a reader of well-developed mind, set up an almost complete check 91, 96; emphasis added. These terms resemble those used to patronize idealistic people of any era, including many currently involved in the environmental movement accused of intuiting an overly gentle view of nature. Salt, after all, chose to live a simple life, without servants: More, he never wrote about Kate, his wife, who Shaw used as the model for his *Candida* and later outed as a lesbian who lived with her husband as a like-minded intellectual companion. Scholars developing a critical method answerable to the demands of a world in crisis should consider the history of criticism in this century, and its deliberate exclusion of earlier, effusive writers like Salt. This essay is not meant as a call for merely affective standards of inclusion in literary discussion: All who love the poems are grateful for this ongoing work. As critical discussion has become more specialized, the effort to be inclusive of students and non-professional readers also becomes a priority, and in this sense writings from the era we now call pre-professional offer old yet relevant models, like good gardening advice that never quite goes out of style. This approach to critical work requires not the slightest lapse in sophistication, and perhaps makes possible a greater elegance than what has become all-too-standard practice. The many versions of practices in contemporary Ecocriticism include a variety of autobiographical approaches that recall and resuscitate the best of Salt. In it, *Elder* combines an examination of the geological history of the Vermont country near his home with stories of his family, particularly the challenges and rewards of raising his teenage son. Such a question at this stage in the ongoing process of "redrawing the boundaries" of cultural studies invites us to revisit the moment when arguments for the exacting, quantifiable practice of literary studies were first perceived as necessary to defend the status of modern literature in the university.

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*The following essay on Shelley s Principles, which has been read, under a different title, at one of the Shelley Society smeeetings, was indirectly the outcome of a friendly challenge from Professor Dowden, to the effect that he, as a lover of Shelley, should like to see someone who places him in the first rank of poets, other than lyrical, show where he is original in his body of thought.*