

# EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH PERIODICALS AND THE CONCEPT OF “NATURE”<sup>1 2</sup>

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**Abstract:** The eighteenth century saw the birth of the periodical, which targeted a growing educated English upper-middle class. This class was pragmatic, open-minded, but also materialistic and ambitious. “Nature” is one of the most frequently-mentioned topics, though its definition was and is vague. The corpus selected presents the paradox that while nature is praised by nearly all contributors as a perfect machine, the flawless creation of a perfect God, at the same time the manipulation of the natural world carried out by this very class went entirely unmentioned in the texts.

**Key Words:** Periodical, nature, creation, eighteenth century, upper-middle class.

## **Las revistas del siglo XVIII y el concepto de “naturaleza”**

**Resumen:** El siglo dieciocho vio el nacimiento de la revista, que se dirigía a una clase creciente de personas educadas de clase media y alta en Inglaterra. Esta clase era pragmática, tolerante, pero también materialista y ambiciosa. “La naturaleza” es uno de los temas más frecuentes, aunque su significado era y es impreciso. El corpus seleccionado presenta la paradoja de que, mientras se elogiaba la naturaleza como una máquina perfecta, la creación de un dios perfecto, por parte de casi todos los autores, al mismo tiempo la manipulación de la naturaleza llevada a cabo precisamente por esta clase pasó inadvertida en los textos considerados.

**Palabras Clave:** Revista, naturaleza, creación, siglo dieciocho, clase media-alta.

## 1. THE PERIODICALS THEMSELVES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTORS

This article studies a selection of eighteenth century English periodicals. Three of the four volumes studied (*The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine*, *The Gentleman and Lady's Miscellany* and *The Lady's Poetical Magazine*) are composed of collections of different issues of the magazines, sometimes painstakingly gathered from private hands by later editors and their collaborators. It would be hard, if not impossible, to generalise about an age from the writings of a few major literary figures, however illustrious. By contrast,

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though it would also be dangerous to generalise about such a long period of time from the reading of its periodicals, there are some observations to be made that are of interest to an overview of the eighteenth century.

Our corpus forms a unit by the kind of contributors and audience the magazines had. Authorship of poems, articles and short stories, enigmas and puzzles, mathematical calculations and astronomical observations, and so on, is usually mentioned in the periodicals (though often in the form of pseudonyms) but rarely mentioned here unless it contributes to the argument of the article, as it generally holds little interest, the writers generally being little known. Indeed some articles are anonymous and other contributors use pseudonyms. Here, we are not generally concerned with great literature by great writers, but by a slightly more representative section (reverends, amateur astronomers, gentry, and so on), albeit clearly of the upper echelons of society.

Addison and Steele's *Spectator* was a pioneering work in the early years of the century, in the sense that it created a taste for light, polite literature for a literate elite which grew in number during the century. Most magazines were monthly, such as *The Gentleman's Magazine*, included in our corpus<sup>4</sup>, and had a circulation of up to a few thousand copies; *The Spectator* up to three thousand early in the century, *The Gentleman's Magazine* itself, from the 1730's on, up to ten thousand. Selling at about 6 pence to 1 shilling, by 1800, two hundred and fifty non-daily periodicals had seen the light of day.

We know that some famous writers, apart from their well-known longer works, also wrote (usually early in their careers) articles, stories or poems in magazines and / or did stints as journalists there. Among them in our corpus were Charles Churchill, Thomas Gray, Dr Johnson, Tobias Smollett, Alexander Pope, Fielding and Daniel Defoe<sup>5</sup>. Most contributors (who were also usually readers) appear to have received nothing for their pains, but were happy just to have their enigmas, riddles, short stories, mathematical problems and poems printed. Consequently, the periodicals in question were able to keep their costs and prices down. I have found that names of regular contributors are repeated year after year.

## 2. READERS

In spite of the great social changes, reading these magazines gives one an impression of a continuum or homogeneity during the century. They help us to understand the thought patterns of this powerful and sometimes advanced and enlightened ruling class in England. As the eighteenth century progressed, magazines increasingly aimed at smaller and smaller

<sup>4</sup> Edward Cave (1691-1754) founded (1731) the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the first modern magazine in English. Cave gave Samuel Johnson his first regular literary employment when he printed (1741-44) Johnson's parliamentary reports, "Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputia". Cave also published other works by Johnson, who later became the magazine's editor.

<sup>5</sup> *The Lady's Poetical Magazine* (19-50) contains a well-known 31-page-long satirical poem by Charles Churchill, *The Rosciad*, as well as Thomas Gray's poem "To a Country Churchyard" (149). Dr Johnson also contributed "The Winter's Walk" (176f.), Tobias Smollett (337) another poem (although the posthumous "Ode to Independence" here included has had its authorship challenged), and Alexander Pope's "Windsor Forest". *Fog's Weekly Journal* in 1736 - 37 included contributions from Fielding, who also contributed to *The Craftsman*, and Defoe wrote in *Applebee's Journal* in 1725. It is said of the latter that his novel-writing style is greatly influenced by his time as a journalist.

sectors of society: young men, young women, ladies, religious groups and so on, as there was an unquenchable thirst for printed matter, and the reading public was more and more numerous and knowledgeable, with the improvements in education making more people more literate and with money enough to spend on non-essentials.

We sometimes know they were aimed at the educated upper classes by their very titles. Many periodicals combine two names, one main one followed by another secondary one. For instance, *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* is subtitled "Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction and amusement. A Magazine for youth of both sexes. To Parents, Governesses and Schoolmasters". So we know many of their readers would probably have been able to afford to employ governesses. The presence of many detailed references to astronomy implies that telescopes, which cannot have been cheap, were available to readers. One letter is published from Cambridge to a young man at Eton. It is this class of people that makes up the audience, but though they do reflect the ideas of the upper class, we know they were read by many more people than those who bought them, servants, maids, cooks and others.

It seems to have been generally a well-educated audience. We can see this, for example, when we read *The Gentleman and Lady's Miscellany* (206ff.), where we can find some almost impossibly difficult mathematical calculations involving the sun's angle, latitudes, shadows of trees, areas of land (often aristocrats' estates), and so on. To cap it all, the solution given usually starts with a phrase such as "'Tis *obvious* that the declination of the sun ..." (my italics). Women sent in answers to the puzzles and enigmas, and write some poems, but relatively few manage to win the prizes offered, mostly free issues of the magazine! Actual official censorship was scarce and English people were very conscious of the value of their freedom of speech. Apart from individuals purchasing magazines, they were also available for reading in public buildings and coffee-shops.

### 3. CONTENT AND STYLE

These publications are an important contribution to the information and entertainment available in print to the English middle/upper classes in this century. Periodicals had mostly content of general interest, as we can see from any index of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, but specialised increasingly as the century progressed. Significantly, *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* appears at the end of the century (1799). Some later in the century included quizzes, dress patterns and illustrations. In matters of both format and content, they give the impression of a readership less obsessed with haste than that of our own age: enigmas to guess or mathematical problems to solve, (plus the answers to the ones in last year's issue), poems, articles and stories, occasional illustrations (often "taken from nature"), astronomical calculations, travellers' tales from exotic places. Nowadays, readers would not have the patience to wait a whole month, three months or a year for the answers to the puzzles set.

Life outside urban England mattered little to the contributors, if we exclude the pastoral poetry, though we know that periodicals did reach more and more people in the countryside, by means of the improving transport system. The mass media in those days was on paper, the printed word, with few illustrations. This means richness of language was a prized ne-

cessity to convey ideas, as when *The Young Gentleman's and Ladies Magazine* (Volume 1: 225) uses a fantastic range of vocabulary describing a pebble found on a beach in Yorkshire, and in Volume 2: 7 where there is a wonderful description of a passion flower. Similarly, in *The Diarian Miscellany* (409) a wealth of vocabulary is used to make descriptions of flowers and botanical phenomena.

It is usually stated that in eighteenth century literature, low and vulgar expressions were ousted in favour of clarity, precision, order and harmony (Rogers: 20f), and this is clearly borne out in our corpus. Language is polite, varied and neutrally educated in style, politeness and etiquette being highly valued since Addison's *The Spectator* was issued. Verse was used very frequently, poetry being a mainstream literary form, not something of an oddity, like it is today. When contributions are in the form of poems, as in *The Gentlemen's and Ladies' Miscellany*, these are of a high technical standard, often with iambic pentameters (6) but also with other meters, including common meter, septenary and octosyllable. Writing is thus not in one particular magazine genre but the same issue often includes various genres: poems, anecdotes, opinion articles, book reviews, theatre reviews, fiction, riddles, mathematical problems and their solutions, parliamentary reports and so on. When collections were made, however, they tended to group together contributions of the same genre. Periodicals were an important conduit for new writing.

### 3.1. "Nature" in Theory

Edward Cave, founder of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the first periodical to be called a "magazine", and the first to be distributed widely in country areas, christened himself *Sylvanus Urban*, the two terms showing the supposed link between "townies" like himself and the countryside. His rivals claimed that in reality he used his privileged position in the Post Office to favour its distribution in country areas. We aim to show how the mainly urban-based periodicals of the eighteenth century likewise praised nature in theory and ignored the realities of profound changes taking place in the landscape, due to enclosure, industrialisation and improvements to estates, most people of the time actually either living an urban life or helping to transform the countryside.

People have always interpreted nature, never seen it for what it really is, as all observers carry a cultural, usually urban, baggage to the countryside. According to Coupe (1): "Sophistication leads us to see things in nature that are not intrinsic." The term "nature" is thus only understandable within a culturally-centred discourse. It is even said resignedly that "there is no such thing as nature" or that there exist "nature" and "Nature", with the former being the real natural phenomena considered literally and the latter being a human construct. Raymond Williams (1983: 219) concludes after a long struggle with the term that: "Nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language."

The concept of "nature" in the eighteenth century has been studied exhaustively by Willey (1940), and others, though not in the context of magazines. The word "nature" was bandied about with different and often vague and contradictory meanings, as it often is today, though all definitions are connected. Dictionaries coincide that it involves two main concepts in its literal sense: on the one hand, it means the animals, plants, rocks, and so on in the world and all the features that happen or exist independently of people, such as the

weather, the sea and mountains. On the other, Nature is also the force and processes that are responsible for life, and with both of these meanings “nature” and its derivative “natural” have now and had then positive connotations, as against what is “artificial”.

The eighteenth century was a period when European knowledge of the world’s flora and fauna had been transformed by voyages of discovery to Africa, Asia and America. Through exhaustive examination and description, people hoped to comprehend the riches of an expanding world, and artists in turn sought greater fidelity to nature. Advances in methods of printing, especially engravings and lithography, allowed greater accuracy in the drawing of plants and animals. Eighteenth century people wanted to put nature into art as accurately as possible, the most celebrated example perhaps being the painter George Stubbs (1724 – 1806). We can see this objective, for example, in *The Young Gentleman’s and Ladies Magazine* (Volume 1: 325f.) which advertises its only illustration with the words: “Embellished with an exact representation of the Bengal Tiger, beautifully coloured from Nature.”

### 3.2. Nature as Ideal: A Divinely Ordered System

In the same issue, a few pages later, a mother describes a silkworm to her daughter: “Providence has so ordered the form of that little insect that...” (329). Thus the process of observing, collecting and classifying natural phenomena, epitomised by Linnaeus (1707-1778), was carried out within a pre-Darwinian scheme of things, part of a static divinely-created order, not part of a dynamic process. Nature was a book, the story of the great creator who had designed all this, the great watchmaker, the watch metaphor being used again and again in these magazines. The idea that God’s sacred truths were inscribed in two books (the Bible and the “book” of Nature), had spread throughout Europe and North America. (Gatta: 73) For example in *The Lady’s Poetical Magazine* (72) we find nature is portrayed as a book full of wisdom: “To Nature and Nature’s book he studiously applies”.

Rogers (10) points out the major role played by nature in the thinking of this century:

One cannot go far in reading eighteenth century books or reading about them without meeting the word. To follow nature was to steer clear of prejudice and pedantry, to shun personal caprice; to reject what is local or temporary. You could follow nature by telling the exact truth about the world around you.

Nature included unsullied, unspoilt human nature and, in our sources, was often used as a measuring rod of common sense. If one only observed what happened to plants and animals one could guide one’s life better. Numerous metaphors are made from nature, one of the most common in our texts being that of children as saplings. If a twig was bent a certain way when planted it would always grow that way, and in the same way, children, once nurtured, would almost inevitably grow up the right or wrong way, according to the quality of their early education and upbringing.

Humans can thus aspire to the ideals of nature. The innocence of human nature was expounded in England by Shaftesbury and, most say, Locke, though not all scholars agree

with this view of the latter<sup>6</sup>. The stress on the idea of original sin and the need for redemption was beginning to be abandoned by thinkers such as Edmund Burke<sup>7</sup>. Opposition to the doctrine of original sin was taken up by the essayist Richard Steele, interestingly, as Steele was one of the editors of *The Spectator*. *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Vol 2: 243) says that: "Peace is the natural state of Mankind; it breathes the Dictate of Reason ... it wears away national prejudices, which national injuries leave upon the mind", though in eighteenth century Britain it could more truly be said that war was the natural state of the nation! So nature is good, the source of peace, tolerance and reason.

There was also a widespread belief that there had been a golden age in the past, harking back to either the Genesis Creation myth or the age mentioned in Greek and Roman mythology, a more innocent age, and *The Young Gentleman's and Ladies Magazine* (Volume 1: 19) tells children of this myth: "In the early ages of the world .... Before engines of destruction were invented ... mankind were of necessity driven to seek for vegetables." Again, (102ff) another writer tells how nature shows the status quo in the world is satisfactory and has the blessing of the Almighty. The periodicals of the day reflect in a simplistic way the dominant philosophy regarding nature without elaborating on it very much.

It is logical that in order to return to this ideal state of things, our attitude towards nature must be changed, and we should not tamper with it needlessly. There is evidence of ecological awareness. In *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* (Volume 2: 467ff) a man advises his son against looking for birds' nests, as it harms the animals. "Now, how can bird's-nesting be reconciled with [your] amiable disposition?" and another opinion article (64) rails against the cruelty to insects and animals so often perpetrated by young boys. In the review of a book (51), another contributor writes an article about: "The Hare, or Hunting Incompatible with Humanity ... written as a stimulus to youth towards a proper treatment of animals", wherein the author claims in a very modern-sounding way that: "Hunting is a kind of torture, from whatever motive it may be pursued. If health is the object, this blessing may equally be promoted by exercise." In *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* (Vol 2: 268), we find a poem against hare-hunting that ends: "...and the loud hunter's shout, O'er a weak, harmless, flying creature, all Mixed in mad tumult and discordant joy." Later in the same collection (428) there is a letter published against hunting. "Is it not astonishing, Mr Editor, that in this age of feeling and refinement, this barbarous custom still should be pursued?" The writer quotes Frederick the Great as saying that he who practises it is more savage than the beasts of prey, and signs "A friend of the animal creation".

Children are taught that in urban life lie only needless sophistication and corruption, and that a return to a happy rural existence is preferable to one in town:

<sup>6</sup> See "Men Being Partial to Themselves" by Greg Forster and Kim Ian Parker, paper presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia. [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/1/5/0/4/8/pages150486/p150486-1.php](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/5/0/4/8/pages150486/p150486-1.php) Accessed July 15th, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Burke wrote *A Vindication of Natural Society: A View of the Miseries and Evils Arising to Mankind* (1756) and attacks the modern human mind, which "every Day invents some new artificial Rule to guide that Nature which if left to itself were the best and surest Guide." This "natural" has as its enemy not religion but the superstition and corruption that have overtaken it in its established form.

But go, mistaken shepherd, go.  
 Gaze at their pomp, attend their show:  
 And then, at length returning tell  
 Where the purer pleasures dwell....  
 Nature can a charm impart  
 Beyond the mimicry of Art. (ibid. 155f)

And elsewhere there is much of the same (*The Diarian Miscellany from the Ladies' Diary*: 79):

Here rural nymphs in homespun grey resort  
 Whose harmless conduct shames the gartered court.....  
 ...Free from vain coxcombs, noisy law and strife.....  
 ....A cleanly cottage and a small estate  
 A faithful friend, and distance from the great.

The author of this is an appropriately-named poetess, one “Eliza Homebred”, almost certainly a pseudonym. The same idea is repeated in numerous pastoral poems, often of dubious quality. As in much eighteenth century literature, modest rural living is frequently compared favourably with corrupt city life; it is a spiritual refuge for the artist, away from the deceits of the world. People of all stations are portrayed as living an idyllic and simple life there, within a society unsullied by materialism and class struggles, where everyone knows their place and keeps to it. However, paradoxically, the world of letters was in fact very much centred on the metropolis, and it is doubtful how much writers actually knew of life in the country. Youth, it is said, needs to cultivate a docile mind, and instruction will lead to an understanding of the God-given natural order of the natural world. One exception is an article full of earthy realism in *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* (Volume 1: 306), where one contributor argues against nostalgia, saying that human society was always the same, that there never was a romantic golden age, and that human nature was always the same.

### 3.3. Nature as a Newtonian Machine

“Magazine science”, as we could call it, is fairly amateurish in the eighteenth century. These days, one would hardly talk in practically the same breath of mathematical angles, eclipses, astronomy, geometry, mythology and theology, and the descriptions we have found of the nature of gunpowder, and the origins of some natural phenomena would cause some hilarity today. In the eighteenth century nature was often considered as being the perfect machine, frequently likened to a watch: “Tho’ the industry of the ancients was very great ... yet was there one thing still reserved for the glory of this age, and the honour of the English nation, the grand secret of the whole *machine*.” (*The Gentleman and Lady's Miscellany* Volume 2: 123, author's italics) He is referring here to the predictable nature of Newtonian physics. Nature was part of a static order of things, like the planets, whirling round in a pre-ordered way, not part of a living process. “God” or “Providence” has created this order of Nature. The English Enlightenment merely illuminates a pre-established divine natural

“order”. In *The Lady’s Poetical Magazine* nature is portrayed as pure and genuine, having a law: “Love is the law of Nature best express’d” (49). Again, a poem by Alexander Pope describes Nature as order within chaos: “...as the world, harmoniously confus’d, Where order in variety we see, And where, though all things differ, all agree” (ibid. 116).

The prediction of eclipses is so important and mentioned so frequently in nearly all the magazines because it demonstrates that the universe is a well-oiled machine. Eclipses are reported from readers abroad, from Gottenborg, Dublin, Gibraltar, Rome, Paris, Amsterdam, South America and even China (Peking), and we are told where and when to see comets. This shows an international scientific community was beginning to emerge. Some calculations are extremely accurate, especially the astronomical ones (*The Gentleman and Lady’s Miscellany* Volume 2: 217) but, strangely, even many mathematical problems are written in poetic form.

The consideration of nature as a machine does not prevent writers using poetry, personifications of natural phenomena and metaphors to describe it. In *The Diarian Miscellany* (18), and elsewhere, eclipses are predicted in florid language: “To the inhabitants of our terraqueous globe... Twice will the moon in her wandering course interpose and hide the splendid rays of the sun.” So nature is in order, and the periodicals contain illustrations of perfect Newtonian spheres and orbits, but there is a poetic way of expressing this perfection. The planets are personalised as masculine (17): “A mighty ring parallel to the equator, bright as the planet’s own face, encompassing round his body... Jupiter next presents himself...” In the same issue (22) the writer talks of “the system of the comets” but a few pages later he also talks of the planets poetically as the “wandering stars”, as if they have a will of their own (30). Mythology, poetry and traditional religion go hand in hand in the texts. The periodicals contain few concrete references to traditional religion, putting the Bible and the Classical myths of Greece and Rome on an almost equal footing. God appears simply as a Prime Mover of the universe. Classical references are compatible with Christianity, and the planets are personalised and made poetic by the Zodiac.

### 3.4. Nature and Women

There is a significant parallelism between attitudes to nature and those towards women. In fact, “ecofeminism” defends both the environment and women’s rights. Perhaps nature is often portrayed as feminine because of its fertility. In spite of the social advances made, both women and nature in the eighteenth century are supposed to have as their main purpose the production, respectively, of children or consumer goods for men, to be respectively tamed and tilled. Women, like “mother nature”, are traditionally expected to be passive, ornamental, produce their offspring, and be moulded by men.

In *The Young Gentleman’s and Lady’s Magazine* (Volume 1: 69) we are told the dire consequences of a girl’s “passion”, here meaning her fury, which results in her breaking ornaments, a vase and a mirror. Many contributors argue that women should be docile like children because nature sets up a hierarchy, with men in charge, while women are led by their feelings: “Men by nature, ‘tis true, have the rule and preheminance (sic) over women, they have generally more reason for their conduct.” (*The Diarian Miscellany from the Ladies’ Diaries* Volume 4:3) The familiar argument is often made that, even so, women are

the power behind the throne, ruling over men almost by subterfuge. Women “have more strength in their looks than men have in their laws, and more power by their tears than the men by all their arguments.” (14) *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* has a very masculine “feel” to it, though it is ostensibly aimed, as its name suggests, at young gentlemen and ladies. One author comments (Volume 1: 50): “It is not to be expected that females are to be deeply skilled in criticism, in mathematics, in natural science”. Women are still to some extent described as a kind of sub-species, whose natural role is merely to give support to men. Science is generally considered solely the realm of men.

The above attitude is certainly present in our corpus, but what would be looked on today as male chauvinism is not the whole story. It is sometimes seen as desirable by enlightened opinion that women should devote more time to improving their minds in scientific matters than to less serious matters. Girls apparently study botany (*The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* Volume 1: 18), and are praised for so doing. This same magazine constantly argues for the convenience of giving education to both sexes. Furthermore, in *The Lady's Poetical Magazine* (2) a male poet claims: “Happy were England, were each female mind, To science more, and less to pomp, inclined”, and goes on to praise one woman: “Behold in her, a scientifick wife”. The same author goes on to claim, in a sudden and unexpected fit of feminism, that God created in order of nobility, first things and the beasts, then man, then lastly woman:

God, having made woman, ended his work, having nothing else more excellent to create... Furthermore, woman excels man in the very matter of which she was made, not being formed out of an inanimate lump of clay, as man was, but out of an animated and purify'd matter... then he made woman out of him, perfect and entire in all her parts.

On the other hand, sometimes they fail to preach by example: in *The Gentleman and Lady's Miscellany*, for instance, nearly all of the hundreds of mathematical problems published are written by and answered by men, (252, 338f etc), although “Amanda” (260) and “Rosamund” (261) are obviously pseudonyms of women.

### 3.5. How Nature was Treated in Practice

Joseph Addison, one of the editors of *The Spectator*, said on one occasion: “A man might make a pretty landscape of his own possessions” (Williams 2000: 50), thus taking it for granted that nature was free to be manipulated. One thing is what was said about nature, but another is what was being done in practice, reports of which are entirely absent from our texts, though not from all literature. We may complain nowadays about how far media representation strays from reality, but in the eighteenth century the gulf was far wider.

Between 1750 and 1780 the English countryside became like the countryside we know today, with hedges, fields and scattered farms. Farming, architecture and landscaping changed the countryside for ever, with landscape gardening demonstrating control over nature. It is paradoxical that nature should be constantly referred to in the periodicals of our corpus as being a model of perfect design, a supposed perfection employed again and

again as an argument for the existence of God, while during the century it was completely transformed.

During the century all the efforts made were directed towards enclosing it, landscaping its gardens by reshaping hillocks, making whole villages disappear in the process because of the whims of the local grandee, and felling whole copses (Goring: 40) and, we might add, tapping its wealth in mines, hunting its animals, breeding new species of sheep, horses and pigs, thus reducing the natural biodiversity, collecting its insects and impaling them on pins, rampaging the whole world in search of its raw materials to make manufactured goods such as furniture and clothes, using new ploughs and threshing machines, dividing its space into longitudes with imaginary man-made lines, using, and becoming somewhat obsessed by, watches and clocks to divide and calculate the passage of the days and hours (clocking in for work was invented during this century), and sometimes ruining the natural landscape by constructing smoke-belching chimneys in the remotest corners of England.

This class of Englishmen "... redesigned Nature, on occasion flattening entire settlements if they spoil the view" (Porter 1982: 75), and, by contrast, they waxed lyrical about nature in periodicals. But then:

Pastoral poetry ... is a comforting aristocratic fantasy that covers up the real conditions of oppression and exploitation in feudal and non-feudal agrarian economies. It is not easy to forget that Sidney's *Arcadia* ... was written in a park which had been made by enclosing a whole village and evicting the tenants. (Williams 1973: 33)

Eighteenth century enclosure was open war against the poor cottagers or squatters, who were simply ejected and had to live on charity. It turned England into private property and made agriculture a more profitable business. Land values went up fourfold during the century, so the landed aristocracy benefited; some also rented out their property, dug mines, developed ports and made roads on their lands, in order to charge the tolls. Industrial and agrarian revolutions accelerated after the middle of the century. The ruling class wanted to be capitalist and innovative, while at the same time preserving traditional supposedly "natural" relations between master and servant. "In other words, they wanted to be governed by the universal free market ... but did not want it to disrupt a society of ordered ranks." (Porter 1982: 361) Fox hunting (an upper class pursuit) was tolerated while bear-baiting, being for the lower orders, virtually disappeared.

What was largely lost was the mystical, magical side to nature. Parallel to this was a kind of nostalgia for the wild, but one must remember that eighteenth century tourism as a pilgrimage to real nature in the Highlands and West Country was undertaken by people who were able to travel because their own lands had not been left in a natural state. "The picturesque journeys... came from the profits of an improving agriculture and from trade." (Williams 2000: 50) Travelling was done, not for pleasure, but with a purpose. Aristocrats travelled and collected / learnt languages, politics, constitutions, plants etc. But none of this is mentioned even once in the periodicals of our corpus.

#### 4. IDEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ATTITUDES TO THE NATURAL ORDER

The natural life is best appreciated, not by those who have to struggle to survive in the midst of it, but by those who see the countryside from their manor-house or passing through it in their car. It is only the rich or middle class urban population that feel or believe the ideal nature of country life, with its buxom wenches and love among the haywains. The myth of unspoilt nature is sometimes deliberately confused with “custom” or “tradition”, thus justifying anything established in the *status quo*. Porter (1982: 377) quotes Edmund Burke in support of this self-interested argument: “The laws of commerce are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God.”

In *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine* (Volume 1: 102ff), when talking about nature, the author of the advice given to children about their behaviour tells them that the status quo is satisfactory and has the blessing of the Almighty. The author tells children that they live in a logical natural world where their only duty is the docility necessary to accept the education which will lead them to the temple of science. Immediately after this, in the same issue, there is a story in serial form telling the life of a pony, using the first person narrator, where the only people who treated it well were better dressed and recognisably middle-class. It is a tale where gypsies come off very badly (they are rough, treacherous people), the implication being that the more people have and the better they dress the better they are morally.

Analysing the ideology of eighteenth century England, Kate Soper (123) concludes that: “The societies that have most abused nature have also perennially applauded its ways over those of “artifice”, have long valued its health and integrity over the decadence of human contrivance.” Nature is in reality neither idyllic nor a machine. In our corpus, widespread poverty is ignored, as is the wholesale alteration of the English countryside. Nobody in our sources mentions the moral or ethical side of the fundamental changes in English society, enclosure and its effect on marginalised rural classes, the social climbing achieved by the merchant classes with its effect on property ownership, improvements in estates, and consequently on social relationships and the English landscape, and so on.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

“Order” is a key word in the British media, having two facets given to it. It is, on the one hand, the result of a series of orders given by a higher authority. On the other hand it means a certain neatness or tidiness, a lack of disorder and chaos. Both meanings are conveyed in the phrase “the New World Order” as I have noted elsewhere. (Floyd 2000: 125f.) Revolutions are foreign to “us”; they are the epitome of disorder and to be avoided at all costs. This is seen in the apocryphal story about the education of Louis XVII by a cobbler after the French Revolution. (*The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine*: Volume 1: 368-371) The natural divine order is reversed when there is a revolution: “O disastrous age! The bitter fruits of anarchy and plunder, of pride and immorality ... frightful debasement of a generous nation”, comments the writer. (ibid. 371) The world view we find in these periodicals is still relatively fixed, in the sense that it is still viewed as immobile, an artefact

of the “Great Mover”, a thing from which information was to be collected and wondered at, but whose nature was still a “given”.

However, on the other hand, during the eighteenth century, encouraged by periodicals like these, the love of science and progress became woven into the fabric of British life. For English people to go a stage further and accept Darwinism was relatively easy. In *The Gentleman and Lady's Miscellany* (402) we find a reference to a Darwin (not Charles but another, older member of that distinguished family):

A modern writer, Darwin, has carried this idea so far as to say that the lichens first grow upon the rocks, and, dying, form a bed for alpine plants; these putrify in their turn and leave a deeper bed of earth for larger vegetables. From the earth of these may arise shrubs, and from shrubs the gradual ascent is easy to the proud mountain pine.

This argument is clearly a foreshadowing of later theories of evolution. Critics of the eighteenth century claim emotions, imagination, feelings and tranquillity were stifled by a rush of progress, free enterprise, capitalism, greed, reason and self-confidence. There is certainly a dark side to this century, whereby Newtonian Laws of Nature and the Order of Nature easily became Law and Order, the law and order imposed by a privileged class. But we can also see reflected in our corpus a burgeoning secular, a pragmatic and open-minded, science-based society emerging from a hierarchical religious one.

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