

JUNGHUHN'S PERCEPTION OF JAVANESE NATURE

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Time is seldom kind to scientific reputations. It did not spare Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn (1809-1864), the "Humboldt of Java," who was celebrated as a geographer, cartographer, ethnologist, volcanologist, climatologist and botanist while he was alive yet judged a poor or indifferent topographer, paleontologist, linguist, ethnographer and geologist less than half a century after his death.¹ His reputation as a botanist survived, however, and even his detractors praised him as a naturalist and a superior writer.² It is precisely these latter qualities that argue for our consideration, if not the fact that nature essays are relatively rare in the history of Dutch colonial letters.

Prior to the twentieth century, tropical nature was either of little interest or merely a decorative literary cliché. Holland's colony was a littoral one and the wildness of the interior (which was thought to commence just a few miles from shore) was anathema. In both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Dutch would have agreed with Aldous Huxley's peculiar opinion that forests are "foreign, appalling, fundamentally and utterly inimical to intruding man."³ They preferred ergatic nature, i.e. land that had been worked, land that turned a profit.⁴

Junghuhn was completely antithetical to this norm. He had a passionate interest in tropical nature, his romantic character delighted in untravelled regions and he had at best an ambivalent attitude toward agricultural colonization. It is probably no accident that prior to the twentieth century the two greatest naturalists of the Indies were naturalized Dutch citizens who had been born in Germany: Georg Everard Rumphius, the seventeenth-century botanist who sacrificed his sight to the loving registration of even the smallest Ambonese herb or flower, and Junghuhn, whose life was cut short by his strenuous

survey of Java's volcanoes. The work of these two men -- the one almost microscopic, the other more telescopic -- remained unique exceptions to the dismissive norm until in the prose fiction of the present century (authors such as Couperus, Vuyk, Dermoût or Alberts) tropical nature was finally presented untrammled and uncensored.

One cannot classify Junghuhn's voluminous writings as fiction, though it was his style that was upheld as the most enduring element of his work. Near contemporaries praised its "poetic élan" (*poetischen Schwung*), its rich vocabulary and superlative "painting of nature" which inevitably had to produce a "masterpiece".⁵ The scientific critics added that the other distinguishing characteristic of Junghuhn's oeuvre was his power as an observer of nature (*Naturforscher*), one who was keenly aware of the natural context and blessed with "a finely honed appreciation of the beauty in nature".⁶ This natural aesthetic sense was always tempered, they felt, by his expert knowledge, his precise observations and his gift for synthesis.⁷ In other words, Junghuhn produced superior nature writing, a genre of literature engendered by the Romantic movement at the end of the eighteenth century and one that became particularly prominent in the literature of nineteenth-century America.

In an attempt to devise a taxonomy of nature writing, Thomas J. Lyon distinguishes three main categories which, he immediately warns, are far from neat and which "intergrade ... with great frequency: natural history information, personal responses to nature, and philosophical interpretations of nature." The intention of the first category is entirely to provide knowledge, of the second "to convey pointed instruction in the facts of nature [within a] literary design", while

in the third category "interpretation predominates and the natural history facts or the personal experiences are decidedly secondary."⁸ The parts of Junghuhn's work that merit critical attention fit all these categories, often incorporating all three in the same text. In chronological order these works are in German: *Die Battakländer auf Sumatra* (The Batak Regions of Sumatra; 2 vols.; 1847; cited as *Batak*); and in Dutch: *Java, zijne gedaante, zijn plantentooi en inwendige bouw* (Java: Its Configuration, Flora, and Internal Structure; 4 vols.; 1850-53; 2d ed. 1853-54; the latter ed. cited as *Java*); *Terugreis van Java naar Europa* (Return Journey from Java to Europe; 1851; cited as *Reis*); and *Licht- en Schaduwbeelden uit de Binnenlanden van Java* (Images of Light and Shadow from Java's Interior; 1854; cited as *Licht*).

The first two texts were considered scientific investigations at the time, but we are now well aware that if what used to be considered pragmatic information was conveyed in written form any claim to objectivity was far from implicit and in fact contingent: subjectivity manipulates presentation. In the nineteenth century this was not yet known as an epistemological problem, hence scientific documents were literary texts as well, verbal messages that tried to persuade; persuasion employs rhetoric and rhetoric is style.⁹ Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), who was probably the only example Junghuhn would have confessed to admire and the most influential scientist of the first half of the nineteenth century, readily admitted this desire to achieve an effect: in the preface to *Kosmos* (Cosmos), that great work of his old age, Humboldt wrote that he wanted to show that "a certain degree of scientific completeness in the treatment of individual facts is not wholly incompatible with a picturesque animation of style."¹⁰ Junghuhn begged his reader's pardon for a similar intention: he apologized for using his unaltered field notes to paint his "scenes" of Java though they are said to provide an

"increased freshness of images and a more animated depiction of natural phenomena." (*Java*, 1: 48). As in other works from that era, science and literature still enjoyed prolific union in Junghuhn's nature writing, though the contrary demands for accuracy on the one hand and sensibility on the other could produce a strain at times and demand arbitration. Analyzing these works as proper literary texts suggests that Junghuhn, more often than not, erred on the side of literature and in the process fashioned a singular view of Indonesian nature, all the time convinced that he was rendering an unbiased depiction of reality.

Disharmony plagued Junghuhn all his life. He only seems to have overcome a recurring sense of estrangement and duality while most profoundly alone with nature. It is, therefore, apt that in his first published work *Reisen durch Java* (Travels through Java; 1845) he quotes Faust's words of despair -- "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust," ("there dwell, alas, two souls in my breast") -- a cry which sums up the dilemma of the Romantic artist as well.¹¹

He was born in 1809 in Mansfeld, at that time a town at the eastern edge of the kingdom of Prussia.¹² His father forced Junghuhn to study medicine in Halle and Berlin though botany and geology were his real interests. As the result of a duel he was imprisoned by the authorities in 1832.¹³ Twenty months later he escaped and made his way on foot from Germany to southern France where he volunteered for the French Foreign Legion. Junghuhn was lucky that he served only five months, thereafter he was discharged as "unfit" and returned to Paris as a civilian.¹⁴

On the advice of the founder of mycology, C.H. Persoon (1761-1836), Junghuhn sought employment with the Dutch colonial government, and in June of 1835 he sailed to Java as a "medical officer third class" to begin a stay of almost thirteen years in the tropics. Junghuhn was an indifferent healer, but luckily some enlightened superiors understood what

were his real talents. In 1840 the future governor-general Merkus commissioned Junghuhn to explore the unknown Batak region of Sumatra, which he did for twenty months, under very difficult circumstances, often in danger of his life. He published his observations in 1847. By that time his father had died, he had been discharged from colonial military service, had been appointed a member of the Commission for Natural Sciences, and had published a description of his travels through Java. One year later he set sail for Europe to begin an extended furlough of seven years. During these years in Leyden he wrote his most important works.

In 1855 Junghuhn returned with his wife to Java. He had been given the rank of inspector and charged with the task of establishing the cultivation of the cinchona tree. This occupied him until his death and embroiled him in yet more academic and professional arguments and disputes.¹⁵ Ironically, Junghuhn primarily became known as the man who made quinine production possible in the Dutch East Indies, whereas his far more impressive achievements as a naturalist were recognized by only a few. He died in 1864, only fifty-four years old, in Lembang in western Java. His place as a pioneering naturalist is ensured now and, like Rumphius, Junghuhn's merit as a botanist is considered equal to his literary abilities. Written with pragmatic lyricism, his best work presents his readers with an awed yet measured appreciation of tropical nature.

The faculty of sight is the predominant sense in Junghuhn's work. This is perhaps to be expected of a man who mapped islands, but it implies more than utility; it points to a way of experiencing the world, an epistemology, if not a philosophy.¹⁶ Humboldt too knew that seeing is more than a mechanical process -- the cornea to focus and the retina to record -- that human vision depends on human intelligence. For him the eye was "the medium through which we may contemplate the universe,"¹⁷ an instruction, Thoreau would say, that is far greater than history, philosophy or even

poetry, exclaiming once with astonishment: "How much virtue there is in simply seeing."¹⁸ That virtue derives from the fundamental necessity of our sensual participation in the world.

The ancient Greeks were cognizant of this and admitted as much in their philosophy and religion. Occupying a lofty place in the Greek pantheon, Apollo is the solar god, the god of light, and by extension the agent of sight, clarity, form and distance (objectivity). Walter Otto interpreted Apollo as signifying the "attitude of cognition ... In Apollo we see the spirit of clear-eyed cognition which confronts existence and the world with unparalleled freedom -- the truly Greek spirit which was destined to produce not only the arts but eventually even science."¹⁹ Thoreau identified with the Apollonian spirit²⁰ and like him Junghuhn too sought to discover the divine in the natural world, to derive from the phenomena in nature a sensible design (which the Greeks and Humboldt called *kosmos*), a comprehension that might be called a law.

The eye of cognition is clearly the eye of the scientist. In Junghuhn's description of Sumatra's Batak region, written in German, one finds several times the revealing phrase "belehrende Aussicht" (*Batak*, 20, 231, etc.) -- an "instructive vista" he can only obtain from a superior elevation. Seeing *teaches* (*belehren*) and the transmission of such cognition is not possible with a simple "view" (*Ansicht*) but only with a distant view, (*Aussicht*) a telescopic survey of the scene that lies before him. The eye of the scientist is a commanding one but even it is blind without the ineluctable prerequisite to make things visible: light. In Sumatra the weather was often intractable and Junghuhn unable to see fixed points for his surveying chores. He somehow had to gain ascendancy over the virgin forest which stood so high that it obstructed any panoramic view.²¹ So he constructed a platform in a very tall tree and in this "airy observatory among *Usnea* and misty

clouds" he waited for three days for the weather to clear. When it did, the sun with one swift illumination surveyed the vast scene before him and instantly "projected" a "map of the Batak region," in fact, one lone sunbeam sufficed to disclose "a small and alien world" he never knew existed (*Batak*, 47-8).

The passage reveals some crucial items, mostly befitting a romantic mind. The instance of divine perception mocks Junghuhn's tedious labors and confronts him with his insufficiency. The Romantics were masters at irony and the text, by juxtaposition of paragraphs, intimates that Junghuhn was aware of his ludicrous situation up there on a dubious platform in a tall "Leptospermum", with the clutter of his unwieldy instruments around him, bereft of suitable company, shivering, cursing the recalcitrant weather. Yet the next paragraph, indeed the rest of his voluminous writings, states that he doggedly continued with his task, an instance of that stubborn will that energized so many of that era's intrepid enterprises. It is an image of eighteenth-century enlightened rationalism outshone by the light of a natural star both fell and radiant, a light that had always been there but seldom seen. It cast the observer into the doubt of the nineteenth century (*Java*, 3: 1001-2), revealed to him his essential loneliness and responded to his display of self-reliance with merciless indifference. There is only one way to combat such an adversary: one gathers small victories. Junghuhn could never match the natural epiphany in the Sumatran forest but he could accumulate small epiphanies of fact.

Junghuhn's style is like his preferred sense: it does not remain fixed (except at the command of objectivity, and then only intermittently) but roams, the way the eye wanders over a natural expanse. It is a tutorial style which also aims to please. His long compound sentences are generally quite extended and constructed from an accumulation of clauses. Many clauses are subordinate but there is a large percentage of coordinate ones, a

grammatical feature that contributes to the hypnotic rhythm of his prose. Subordinate clauses are a cognitive aid: they make the main clause more precise, fine-tune its meaning as it were, qualify its illustrative material. Coordinate clauses, on the other hand, amplify without compelling necessity, they can add contiguous beauty without syntactical compulsion. Junghuhn's style, therefore, reflects a contradiction that was inherent in his work: the subordinate clauses share the ordering function of science while the coordinate ones are content to supply a more contingent material that is usually aesthetically pleasing. Hence it is a style that alternates between seduction and instruction, a style, I would think, that is most often employed by nature writing in general and by nineteenth-century scientists in particular. No matter what the intention might be, however, such a style is no longer objective, nor innocent.

In Junghuhn's writings nature is feminine, the language he uses to describe her is sensual, and his favorite figurative device is the metaphor. Nature as the floral realm is often capitalized (i.e. "Flora"; *Java*, 2: 237 for instance), it is explicitly a "living" nature (*Java*, 1: 669) and has such female attributes as a "womb" (*Java*, 1: 49). Another, related, usage is a seductive vocabulary concerning plants, flowers in particular. Exceptional specimens lure the traveller -- one must remember that Junghuhn considers the botanist the ideal traveller (*Java*, 1: 501) -- "draw his glance" to them (*tot zich trekken*). "Small, fiery yellow flowers draw one's eye" (1: 302); the badori shrub "attracts glances with its lilac-blue, bouquet-like flowers which present themselves to the eye amid the pale, copper-green of this shrub's large leaves" (1: 319). Leaves can be just as alluring: various kinds of trees "irresistibly draw the eye to them with the green of their foliage" (344). Fifty-foot tall Pandanus trees are no less seductive, they too "attract the glance of the traveller" (268), in fact, entire mountains vie with

each other "to take precedence [in terms of] the beauty of their trees" (344).

Given Junghuhn's sensual style, feminine interpretation of nature, love for forests and occasional use of clichés, one might expect that he would frequently refer to unspoiled, tropical woods as "virgin forests". He does, but rarely. The adjective he uses most frequently is *oorspronkelijk* in the sense of "original," "primeval," even "native" or "autochthonous." One often telling item in Junghuhn's vocabulary is *physiognomy*, used both as an adjective and as a noun. Humboldt also used it very often, as did other nineteenth-century authors who wrote about the life sciences. It refers to a way of viewing the world that aims at closeness even at the expense of objectivity. It intimates a convivial intellectuality that brings Junghuhn suddenly very close to Rumphius. The plain meaning of the word already suggests proximity: the collective features of a face. These cannot be discerned in detail if we maintain an objectifying distance. Junghuhn spurned human intimacy, but *visual* closeness could be transferred to nature and Junghuhn uses the term most often in the sense of a "characteristic aspect" of nature. This was current usage based on the notion that the countenance was an index to someone's mind and character. Such a somatic "reading" was the cooperative effort of mind and eye that Junghuhn reserved for the organic world around him.

The foregoing evidence allows us to say that, though Junghuhn's tools were empirical and analytical, the main effect of his nature writings was subjective rather than objective, closer to an art than a technique. Nor does this necessarily compromise accuracy because there is the precision of the lover as well as that of the laboratory. As a poetic construct, the Java that Junghuhn saw was undoubtedly correct, though it is not the Java most people would know about.

Even in the nineteenth century, Java was the major island of the Sunda Islands. The reason for that was its large

population, its big cities, the colonial capital of Batavia (now Jakarta), and the large portions of cultivated land. What Junghuhn presents to his reader is a surreptitious paradise of mountains and virginal forests that is wellnigh uninhabited. Everything Junghuhn encounters he judges according to a scale that has nature as the most positive extreme and civilization as the lowest and most common of denominators. This is seldom done vociferously, though it can happen at times, but mostly intimated through subtle, perhaps unconscious manipulation of the text. Junghuhn's texts allow a diegetic process that makes one conclude that his "nature" was not only the Romantics' or Humboldt's or a nineteenth-century abstraction of a concrete landscape, but that beyond them it signified a standard that excluded all else. Encoded in Junghuhn's "scientific" and narrative texts (which together form really one paradigmatic discourse) is a notion of nature that is as supreme as any religion and as concrete as the most severe prescriptive law. Nature subsumes all. She is inimitable, beyond human consideration, Spinoza's *natura naturans*. What makes Junghuhn's text so peculiar is the simple but astonishing fact that for him there is no gap between sign and referent. Nature is not an abstraction but a constant reality, a phenomenal inevitability. What happens is that when in Junghuhn's work concepts are signified, be it from the code of positivistic science, from Romanticism or from Humboldt, the sign "nature" will suddenly overwhelm the significant concept because she can never be less than it. Consequently, Junghuhn builds hierarchies from the top, that is to say nature, down. He can only deal with the world from the perspective of nature, can only think in organic terms.

One example has to do with Junghuhn's dislike of cultivated land. Reluctantly he discusses one of the colony's most profitable enterprises: tea and coffee plantations. Even the amount of space he devotes to either crop suggests his bias: tea

plantations are dismissed in half a page while coffee plantations need eight pages (*Java*, 1: 408-416). Both crops require the elimination of primordial forests, hence both should be negative in terms of Junghuhn's nomenclature. However, coffee plantations are discussed in positive terms, and the reason for this is purely arboreal. Tea requires the elimination of trees, coffee needs shade trees. Whereas a tea plantation presents a "barren and monotonous look," the coffee plantation "presents to the eye of the beholder ... a luxuriant, green wood that is enlivened by insects, birds, and a number of small, fourfooted animals." Furthermore, coffee shrubs reach heights that are more in keeping with Junghuhn's notion of how tall a proper tree should be. Tea shrubs are always indicated as being small (using the Dutch diminutive; 408) but Junghuhn takes care to mention that young coffee shrubs grow to a height of 12 to 15 feet and, more importantly, they can attain a height of 30 feet or more in old, deserted plantations "where the trees were left to grow wild since they no longer produced fruit" (413). That is the point for this most uncolonial of colonials: the fruit, the coffee bean, is a liability to Junghuhn, it prevents the return of the forest. Hence coffee plantations are to be preferred to tea plantations because the former resemble a wood even when they're still a flourishing business enterprise and because they turn into a wild wood when they are infertile. That is to say: when these commercial estates become poor economically they acquire a superior wealth of wood and branch. Junghuhn intimates his disdain for the lucrative bean even more graphically by composing a most fetching portrait of the *musang*, a carnivore that resembles the marten. Colonial literature commonly refers to this coffee rat as a nuisance, a chicken thief with a voracious appetite. Junghuhn, however, only knows a cheerful rascal whose destructive tendencies are quite endearing. The animal has "a cheery disposition," is "quick and easy in his movements," and is "easily tamed." Even

the *musang's* notorious pilfering is mentioned without prejudice. Junghuhn's unusual affection for the animal is not just the love of a naturalist for anything that is wild but derives from the fact that the animal eats coffee beans. It "prefers the fruit of the coffee tree above any other food" writes Junghuhn; it eats only the juicy fruitflesh while later the animal "excretes the undigested kernel which, as the Javanese insist, represents the best-tasting coffee, which must probably be ascribed to the fact that the animal partakes only of the ripest fruits (413)." Junghuhn's *musang* resembles the trickster hero of the North-American Indians. The animal is his ally in hastening the coffee plantations to the desired state of uselessness, and the animal's irreverent advertising of the best grade of coffee is a pungent denunciation not commonly available to proper nineteenth-century scientists.

Another example of Junghuhn's circumvention of reality is the native Javanese village. Junghuhn was a misanthrope. There are psychological but also solid ecological reasons for this: people destroy nature. On an overpopulated island like Java it was difficult, even in the middle of the nineteenth century, to avoid humanity. Junghuhn could ignore cities by concentrating on nature, but he could not keep on refusing to take notice of the native population because he kept on bumping into their villages. But in a text that formulates its own hierarchies, based on nature, the author manages to deal with them by calling them *dorpsboschjes* (1: 231; 2: 188; 3: 545), which translates as "small village-forests". *Village* implies civilization and agriculture, hence is decidedly negative; *small forest* (*boschje*) is nature, partakes of trees, hence is positive and is strong enough to upgrade the element "village" in the compound noun. Another element of horror for Junghuhn was entanglement. Again the reason is both psychological and practical, but suffice it to say that there is a hierarchy of entanglement as well. Javanese villages are said to be surrounded by an

"impenetrable hedge" (1: 233) which seems to deny entry. But this is a more positive kind of fortification because the circle around the little forest called a village is formed by the greatest transformation a grass can achieve: it is bamboo and is called a "tree-like grass" (1: 234). It has sudden openings and Junghuhn writes that "we enter as if through a vaulted gate into the forest" (note: not into the village!). "Vaulted gate," translates *poortgewelf* where *gewelf* is a positive word in Junghuhn's index because it is associated with the overarching foliage of the grandest of trees (1: 509), while it is also part of the architecture of his ideal church: open nature, the "high-vaulted church with a roof bestrewn with stars" (*Licht*, 33).

There is no entanglement in this tree-approved habitation. The "yellowish stems" of the bamboo, taller than coffee trees at 40 to 70 feet in height, are planted at regular intervals. Junghuhn's descriptive vocabulary states his approval: the top of the bamboo is "adorned with a soft foliage that is moved by even the slightest breath of wind, [and which] inclines in an arch-like fashion, thus forming the most beautiful arcades" (1: 233). Cool, inviting, shady, without thorns, these forest dwellings house a community of trees rather than a commonwealth of people.

The image of the native village (or *kampong*) as a tropical bower might seem to be a romantic one, which it is to some degree, but the textual associations also mark it as a unique designation. For instance, rather than a human habitation the text presents us with a place where domesticated trees cohabit, hence the metonymy for these *kampongs* is not the Javanese peasant or *abangan* but the *waringin* tree. In the most populous of the Sunda islands it is not the human being that is its paradigmatic representative but a large *Ficus* tree whose superiority Junghuhn emphasizes with the epithet: "mountain! of foliage."²²

Similarly, Junghuhn can only deal with human beings if he can turn them into aspects of nature. Face to face, the

Javanese are as unnatural as Europeans, in fact worse because they are subservient, that is to say the furthest removed from the signification "free." This is in reference to the sign "nature" because for Junghuhn, nature means supreme freedom, Thoreau's "strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself." Human society is not a prerequisite for significant existence. Junghuhn would endorse Thoreau's notion that the sweetest and most beneficent society is to be found in Nature and that with her no man need ever be lonely.²³ But in Java, that most populous island of the Indies, Junghuhn keeps bumping into human habitations, so he turns the villages into miniature forests (*dorpsboschjes*) and enumerates their *sylvan* denizens. People should really be plants, hence what is more natural than classifying a population in terms of a "plant geography," i.e. that organic life is influenced by physical factors in its environment? Examples are plentiful.

The Bataks in Sumatra are superior to the Javanese because "they are free, no one rules over them, just as no other heights rise above the high plateau where they live" (1: 105). For similar reasons of geographical elevation, the Sundanese people are accorded Junghuhn's supreme compliment: they are "very good naturalists [*natuurkenners*], and especially good botanists" (1: 501). The unstated reason is that the Sunda region is mountain country; some Sundanese even refer to their language as *Bahasa Gunung* or "mountain language." The Tengger mountains too are described positively and at great length (3:802-890). This is high country, dotted with mountain lakes, covered with unaxed woods and inhabited by an indigenous, non-Javanese people. The entire region reminds Junghuhn of northern Europe (823), particularly its plants, and the logical conclusion soon follows: the "character [of the region's] flora is idiosyncratic, such is also the case with the mores, customs and dwellings of the inhabitants" (823). They do such European things as building their houses

with planks (not *atap* or tropical thatch) and keeping a fire going in a hearth. Their homes are communal, theft is unknown (826), and they keep herds of buffalos which return voluntarily to their stables at night (825) as if they grazed in the Swiss Alps. The Tengger people are lazy and ugly (826) but it does not matter. They are stronger and better built than the Javanese (826), prefer superior Hinduism over nefarious Islam (824) and worship the volcano Bromo which, according to Junghuhn, is a name that "undoubtedly means Brahma." (825). Like the big woods that were left alone, these people too are designated as "the original [*oorspronkelijk*] inhabitants of Java" (824), and they too are few in number (824), but they live "happily in this solitary, cool, remote area of the mountain range, and they would not leave it for all the treasures of the lowlands" (3: 827).

Human, botanical or animal superiority is determined by elevation. The excellent Tengger people live at an elevation of between 5000 and 7500 feet (3: 806), the superior Sundanese between 2000 and 4000 feet (1: 102), the fine Sumatran Bataks at 4000 to 5000 feet (1: 103) -- but their plateaus are barren and totally devoid of trees -- and the lowly Javanese suffer at a meager 200 to 250 feet above sea level (1: 103). Given such a scale, no wonder Junghuhn's Dutch employers are seldom mentioned!²⁴

Once diegesis has established an author's idiosyncratic discourse, one can spot how a text (as the expression of an author's unconscious bias) can get its will across in the most diverse ways. The process is metonymic and proceeds via contiguity. For instance, though for most people a symbol of beauty, for Junghuhn peacocks equate with wilderness (3: 900). "Wilderness" is not a positive term but refers to *alang-alang* savannahs, grass-seas Junghuhn despised. The contiguous logic behind this identification is that peacocks are always seen in the vicinity of tigers (1: 308), tigers prefer to hunt in the low-lying *alang-alang* fields and are seldom seen at any significant elevation

above the coast, hence peacocks are synonymous with wilderness. When a wood is attacked by lumbermen and villages infiltrate its sacred space, the verb used for this destruction is *uitroeien*, which is normally associated with the extermination of people. *Rooien* is associated with trees. At one point Junghuhn indicates the negative declension which holds true throughout his work: axed forests = agriculture = villages = *alang-alang* wilderness (1: 318). An even terser reduction is possible: *alang-alang* equals civilization (1: 344).

Scenes of habitation gain in beauty when people are asleep (1: 342-3) and generally speaking, night invokes the most lyrical of reflections. Although the city of Bandung is "heavily populated" it is "lovely" when Junghuhn arrives; this was during the tropical siesta and people were asleep and therefore "silent".²⁵

A very rare description of a city, Semarang in this particular case, occupies only half a page and a funeral "very appropriately" concludes the brief description (3: 637). A comparable distributive bias can be found in a "general survey" of Java's flora (1: 218) that is twenty-eight pages long (1: 226-254). Five pages are needed to describe night falling in a Javanese village (people are not mentioned), three pages are devoted to descriptions of animals of which one third is required to describe a kind of bee. In terms of this text, the *selemprang* is a special kind of Edenic bee because it lives only in Sundanese mountain villages, it does not sting, does not even hum when it flies, and lives with the mountain people under one roof as if one of the family and lives, like him [i.e. the mountain man], quietly and content" (247). Seven pages enumerate useful plants but nearly half of the entire section, thirteen pages in fact, is required to describe local trees.

Scanning the text like this also discloses the real, though almost hidden reason for the indifferent appreciation of the Javanese. After diegesis has put certain terms in a clear order of

preference, references such as the ones given above are no longer surprising. They are so incidental that they seem trivial, however, the opposite is the case. In Junghuhn's discourse of nature wherein elevation bestows eminence, we encounter the alleged fact that a Muhammedan Javanese will not voluntarily climb a mountain (3: 743). Whether this is true or not is irrelevant, for this footnote condemns the Javanese once and for all. It also indicates its opposite: Hinduism is superior to Islam because Junghuhn found on several occasions hitherto unknown ruins at high elevations, and they were all of Hindu origin.

One can also easily ignore the information that a Javanese head in Malembong did not know the names of any of the mountains in his district. He had to ask around for this information (3: 597). The Javanese clearly lack what Junghuhn calls *berglust*, which can be translated as *mountainlust* (3: 578) which, in turn, is part of a larger codification. "One seldom finds the Javanese volunteering to be part of any trip into the mountains. Almost all of them are possessed by a great indifference to the wonders of nature which their country offers them; they avoid all bodily exertion like the plague" (3: 558). The negative reference to work is not the main interest of this statement, although it illustrates Junghuhn's ignorance of Javanese society. As a critic has pointed out, it is not so much that the Javanese hate physical work as that "exaggeration of effort is socially condemned."²⁶ The crucial criticism however, is their indifference to nature, and this disinterest is, once again, simply their way of interpreting existence. A Western scholar has bluntly stated that "few Javanese appear to consciously enjoy the beauty of their natural environment. The Javanese seem to be absorbed primarily in their social and cultural environment, of which they are extremely conscious."²⁷ A Javanese Thoreau is unthinkable.

No rapprochement is possible when two worlds are so diametrically opposed.

Junghuhn's denunciations might ostensibly seem motivated by historical prejudice, but they are really expressions of a very personal and inflexible interpretation of life and the world. A specific code of ethics and an epistemology are encoded in Junghuhn's discourse; they inevitably shaped a body of writing which for a considerable time maintained a place of prominence as the best generic description of Java that the scientific method could produce. Analysis of this work as a *literary* text shows that, on the contrary, objectivity was not its bias and the world it disclosed was not the expected scientific construct that should be independent of subjective interpretation.

NOTES

¹*Gedenkboek Franz Junghuhn 1809-1909* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1910), 66, 74-6, 80-1, 86, 88, 90, 97, 119, and further. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

²*Gedenkboek*, 60-1, 245, 269.

³Aldous Huxley's remarks from the essay "Wordsworth in the Tropics," in *Collected Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 1-2.

⁴F. de Haan, *Priangan. De Preanger-Regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuur tot 1811*, 4 vols. (Batavia: Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1910-12), 2:727-732; Gerard Brom, *Java in onze kunst* (Rotterdam: Brusse N.V., 1931), 1, 5, 6, 28-9, 35-6, 141; for the term "ergatic" see my essay "Let it Be: The Ergatic in Netherlandic Poetry and Art," in *Verbal/Visual Crossings 1880-1890*, ed. Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 281-334.

⁵*Gedenkboek*, 61, 245, 269.

⁶*Gedenkboek*, 81, 245.

⁷*Gedenkboek*, 245, 60, 269.

⁸Thomas J. Lyon, *This Incomperable Land. A Book of American Nature Writing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 3, 5, 4, 7.

⁹Compare *Languages of Nature, Critical Essays on Science and Literature*, ed. L.J. Jordanova (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 20f.

¹⁰Quote from contemporary translation: *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, trans. E.C. Otté, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), 1: ix.

¹¹F. Junghuhn, *Topographische und Naturwissenschaftliche Reisen durch Java* (Magdeburg: Emil Baensch, 1845), 6.

¹²Biographical material from: *Gedenkboek Franz Junghuhn 1809-1909; Java's onuitputtelijke natuur: Reisverhalen, tekeningen en fotografieën van Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn*, ed. R. Nieuwenhuys and F. Jaquet (Alphen aan den Rijn: A.W. Sijthoff, 1980); *Franz Junghuhn. Biographische Beiträge zur 100. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages*, ed. Max C.P. Schmidt (Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1909); C.W. Wormser, *Frans Junghuhn* (Deventer: W. Van Hoeve, n.d.); Paul van 't Veer, *Geen blad voor de mond. Radicalen uit de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1958).

¹³*Franz Junghuhn*, ed. Schmidt, 168; but see *Java's onuitputtelijke natuur*, ed. Nieuwenhuys, p. 18. Furthermore see: C. Steinmetz, "Culturele Gegevens uit Familiepapieren," *Cultureel Indië*, 4 (1942), 60-72, 173-182.

¹⁴*Junghuhn* (ed. Schmidt), 168, 171, 302.

¹⁵The foreword to the second edition of *Java* ("Voorrede der Tweede Uitgave" in the first volume) is filled with accusations, particularly against Blume, the leading botanist in Leyden at the time. Koorders in *Gedenkboek* (238, 240, 261, and further) makes it clear that Junghuhn's botanical contributions were deliberately mismanaged to further the careers of his colleagues. Junghuhn did not have an ingratiating personality yet his work was valuable, hence academic larceny could not be far behind. See also: *Java's onuitputtelijke natuur*, 128-132.

¹⁶See *Licht- en Schaduwbeelden*, pp. 91-5; also Jordanova in *Languages of Nature*, 27ff.

¹⁷Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 1: 83.

¹⁸Quoted in Herbert Gleason, *Thoreau Country* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1975), xii. See also the "Sounds" chapter in *Walden*; Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; Walden; The Maine Woods; Cape Cod*, ed. Robert F. Sayre, The Library of America, 28 (New York: Literary Classics of the United States Inc., 1985), 411.

¹⁹Walter Otto, *The Homeric Gods*, transl. Moses Hadas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 78-9.

²⁰Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord . . .*, The Library of America, 28, pp. 82-3.

²¹*Batak*, 47. The original sentence reads: "Denn die hohe Urwaldung verbarg ausserdem alle Aussicht."

²²In the original " ... levendig groen gebladerte, -- een berg! van loof, zoo dicht, zoo schaduwwijk ..." (*Java*, 1: 244). The exclamation point after "berg" (i.e. "mountain") indicates the superior designation.

²³Thoreau in *Walden*, "Solitude" chapter; Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord*, etc., Library of America, 28, p. 425, 427-431.

²⁴Holland is negatively contrasted with a Romantic landscape and said to be like the sea: "Bald waren die Gebirge und die romantischen; steilen Ufer des Stroms verschwunden, und das flache Land, naturarm und eintönig, breitete sich aus, ein Vorbild des Meeres, in dessen Boden es allmählig überläuft" (Italics added). Junghuhn, *Topographische und Naturwissenschaftliche Reisen durch Java*, 2. Like Thoreau, Junghuhn disliked the sea precisely because it lacks variety and is invariable; see *Reis*, 25, 32.

The opposition between lowland and mountain region is spelled out by Junghuhn in his account of his journey back to Europe. "Wanneer ik de physiognomie van een vlak, of slechts met heuvelen van geringe hoogte bedekt land: onbevredigend, eindeloos, nergens zich hechtend, wegsmeltend, gemoed verstompnd mag noemen, dan zijn verheven, boeiend, opwekkend, de hoop verlevendigend en tevens toch ook verlangenstillend, geruststellend, -- de woorden, welke althans eenigermate den indruk schilderen, die elke grootsche gebergte-natuur althans op mijn gemoed te weeg brengt." (*Reis*, 26). This is practically impossible to translate because the prejudicial terms have various connotations. Suffice it to say that flat land does not satisfy (*onbevredigend*), that it is endless (*nergens zich hechtend*), that it dissolves (*wegsmeltend*) and that it dulls the spirit (*gemoed verstompnd*); a high mountain region on the other hand is sublime (*verheven*), fascinating (*boeiend*), stimulating (*opwekkend*), reassuring (*geruststellend*) while it stills longing (*verlangenstillend*) and revives hope (*de hoop verlevendigend*). This is as categorical as Kant who, one might add, would have agreed with Junghuhn.

²⁵Such stylistic nuances are more readily evident in the original. The phrase I am referring to reads (italics added for emphasis): " ... het sterk bevolkte, doch stille, lieflijke Bandong ..." (*Java* 3: 551).

²⁶Niels Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java. Cultural Persistence and Change* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1978), 84.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 83-4.