The Romantic origins of environmentalism, scholars have begun to realize, must be told as a transatlantic story. While many scholars recognize that Romantic writers such as Wordsworth, Emerson, and Thoreau inspired and helped shape the modern environmental movement, the specifics of how that influence played out and crossed national boundaries, in social and cultural as well as literary terms, has not been fully documented, partly because of artificial divisions between American and British studies of literature and culture. Only during the past few years, with the burgeoning of transatlantic Romanticism, have significant numbers of critics begun to follow the lead of James McKusick's important early study, *Green Romanticism* (2000), in exploring such transatlantic linkages in depth. Dewey Hall's book aims to further this project by tracing lines of influence from Gilbert White through Wordsworth, Emerson, Octavia Hill, and John Muir. Hall's goal, he writes, is "to demonstrate how Romantic naturalists--Wordsworth and Emerson--motivated early environmentalists--namely, Hill and Muir--to take action in protecting the environment" (7).

In pursuing this project, Hall not only traces literary and cultural influences between these figures; he also joins a growing trend in Romantic studies by foregrounding the scientific contexts--including natural history, meteorology, geology, and botany--that informed such writers. Through such contexts, Hall's book consistently links its writers' environmental orientations to the spirit of *natura naturans*--or the dynamic processes of "nature nurturing"--as opposed to the fixed forms of *natura naturata*, or "nature natured." By engaging the environment in terms of ongoing processes, Hall argues, Romantic writers laid the grounds for current ecological understandings, including models of ecosystems as dynamic, interdependent complexes of both biotic and abiotic relationships. Most of the book focuses on its main figures' engagement with various forms of naturalism and their influence on one another. The book also grapples with Romantic writers' resistance to the impact of "industrialism" and "urban blight" (2) on nineteenth-century environments, including a chapter on Wordsworth and Emerson's reactions to the rapid expansion of the railways.

In arguing that these Romantic writers can best be understood as "naturalists," Hall distinguishes his approach from a variety of other critical positions. Against idealist claims of "natural supernaturalism" (24) that associate such writers primarily with spiritual meanings and values, Hall links these figures to a "biocentric view of nature that does not need to see an image of itself refracted a dozen times in the poststructuralist hall of mirrors" (24). As this sentence suggests, Hall also rejects--or at least plays down--ideological readings of these writers, readings that construe their representations of nature or environment in terms of social forces and identities. He dismisses William Cronon's argument for the social construction of nature and wilderness, for instance, as that of a postmodernist entering an "ideological quagmire" (19) of relativity. He also disputes the claims of critics such as Dana Phillips and Robert Macintosh, who argue that we tend to project current, scientific ideas of ecology misleadingly back onto the Romantics, despite their lack of truly ecological thinking or direct influence on later scientific ecologists. In addition, Hall critiques studies that link his Romantic environmentalists to aesthetic preoccupations and the picturesque: studies including--full disclaimer--my own recent book, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship* (2012). Against these various approaches, Hall claims that his book demonstrates how "the deeper currents" of Romantic influence on current environmentalism are "scientific, derived from natural history, rather than cultural" (21).

The scope of the project encompasses an admirable range of transatlantic environmental influences and lays out some provocative claims. Yet in my opinion, the cogency of Hall's argument is undermined by serious methodological problems of various kinds. The first, foundational problem is its failure to show conclusively why we should consider Wordsworth and Emerson primarily as "Romantic naturalists." Calling them "naturalists" mainly because they wrote about natural phenomena, the book does not consider how much they engaged in specific naturalist practices and ways of thinking. Though Hall repeatedly juxtaposes their descriptions of natural phenomena with scientific accounts of the origins of such phenomena, these connections don't prove them "naturalists," any more than writing about clouds, plants, or rocks makes one a meteorologist, botanist, or geologist. Consider for example how Hall links Wordsworth's description of clouds in *Guide to the Lakes* to the meteorological phenomenon of convection:

Though Wordsworth does not theorize about this geo-meteorological process in cloud formation, he does see a connection between the lakes and the clouds: "... all else speaking of tranquility;--not a breath of air, ... except the clouds gliding in the depths of the lake" [...] For instance [...] in his description of the wind interacting with the Lake of Rydal as if "to carry its waters from their bed into the sky," Wordsworth observes: "The white billows in different quarters disappeared under clouds, or rather drifts, of spray, that were whirled along, and up into the air by scouring winds, charging each other in..."
A passage rich with figurative and aesthetic language has been interpreted here as the work of a "naturalist" simply because it describes a natural phenomenon in depth. To be a naturalist in a meaningful sense, though, one has to study the environment through specifically scientific methods and orientations. Muir, for instance, is clearly a naturalist in his methods; likewise, Emerson's protégé Thoreau eventually developed a naturalistic orientation. Wordsworth and Emerson, however, are typically considered much more interested in the spiritual and symbolic meanings of nature than in naturalist study, despite their awareness of such study. For this reason, Hall's claim that Wordsworth and Emerson were naturalists is provocative. To substantiate such a claim, though, he would have had to explain in depth what he merely glances at from time to time: how his writers grappled with the specific scientific practices and contexts of Romantic-era naturalism. Without such explanation, the book fails to establish its central premise: that writers such as Wordsworth and Emerson should be considered primarily as naturalists.

Hall's argument also tends to suffer from reductive either/or thinking. He fails to consider that Romantic writers could be influenced by spiritual, cultural, and social factors as well as by naturalism, in ways that complexly impacted one another. They could be influenced by aesthetics as well as science, for instance, or by the interaction of the two, as in discourses of the sublime and the picturesque that brought these two spheres together. Hall ignores recent studies of such interconnections, including Ron Broglio's stimulating book, *Technologies of the Pictureque* (2008). He cites Noah Heringman's *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (2004), but does not engage its characterization of Romantic-period writing as "a body of poetry obsessed with mountains, but also a geology steeped in aesthetics" (xiv). On the contrary, shortly after dismissing the importance of the picturesque for Wordsworth and his *Guide to the Lakes*, Hall cites the following passage to demonstrate Wordsworth's involvement with meteorology:

> Akin to these [vapors] are fleecy clouds resting upon the hill-tops; they are not easily managed in picture with their accompaniments of blue sky; but how glorious are they in nature! how pregnant with imagination for the poet! and the height of the Cumbrian mountain is sufficient to exhibit daily and hourly instances of these mysterious attachments. (51)

In spite of Hall's claims, the meteorological elements in this description are clearly outweighed by its picturesque and cultural features. Overall, Hall's failure to see how culture and aesthetics interact with science in Romantic writing severely limits the richness and complexity of his analysis. At a deeper level of irony, when Hall claims that Romanticism's main influence on environmentalism is scientific rather than cultural, he undermines his own project, which foregrounds cultural influence and includes only glancing accounts of Romantic-period natural science.

Like some other forms of ecocriticism, this book also suffers from an unfortunate phobia of literary and social theory. Contesting, for instance, Cronon's claim that "there is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness," Hall writes that "if wilderness lacks the 'natural,' what is to make up its substance " (20). He thus fails to see that while a non-human environment of course exists beyond human signs and meanings, we necessarily access it through our own human representations, in this case our "concept of wilderness." Hall seems to think instead that scientific or naturalist terms give us direct access to the "substance" or reality of nature. If he wants to take such a position, which seems to me a naïve form of realism, he at least needs to reckon with Timothy Morton's extended recent critique of it. In books such as *Ecology Without Nature* (2007) and *The Ecological Thought* (2010), Morton exposes the emptiness of "nature" as a critical and theoretical category and demonstrates the problem of claiming direct representation of "reality." Hall also seems to believe he can sidestep the cultural or ideological construction of nature even while addressing social and political issues, such as Wordsworth and Emerson's reaction to the railways or Muir's campaign to preserve Hetch Hetchy. Such theoretical naïveté blinds Hall to his own assumptions at times and hinders his ability to offer compelling social interpretations. The book has an unfortunate tendency also to argue by assertion in places where its arguments require more development and support. Without sufficient evidence or attention to counterarguments, for instance, Hall claims that the picturesque was not important to the Romantic writers treated here; he also asserts that "in 1844, Emerson foresaw the value of sustainability" as defined by the Brundtland Commission report of 1987 (112).

At the same time, the book tends to be too thin and unconvincing in demonstrating the specific influences of its main figures on one another. While ably tracing personal and textual connections between these figures, the book's account of how they substantially influenced or intellectually resembled each other tends to be vague and overgeneralized. Take for example Hall's claim that Wordsworth's *Evening Walk* "echoed White's work by beginning with a description of features in the landscape" (12), a characteristic of all loco-descriptive writing; or that both men write about "habitats factors"--biotic and abiotic--affecting life," including "insects, plants, and animals" and "climate, water, and soil" (15); or that [wh]ile White's language differs from Wordsworth's diction, both participate in naturalizing the natural through their scientific observations" (55). Such claims are far too general to establish meaningful influence. In his almost equally vague account of Emerson's influence on Muir, Hall's invocation of the "Over-Soul" and egalitarian holism adds little to the existing critical conversation. Likewise dubious are claims that Emerson moves from "theocentrism toward biocentrism" (63) or that "matriarchy supersedes spirituality" (178) for Wordsworth, Emerson, and Muir--another big assertion with little substantial argument to back it up.

The thinness of this book's accounts of influence stands out even more clearly when it is set beside comparable studies, such as David Greenheim's *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism* (2012) and Samantha Harvey's *Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, and Nature* (2013). Besides challenging or at least complicating in advance Hall's claim that Emerson privileged matter over spirit, these books offer a far more developed and satisfying account of transatlantic influence.

In places, this book seems unaware of what it adds to the existing critical conversation, which results in unnecessary tangents. Since the history of Muir's campaign to preserve Hetch Hetchy is widely known, why take nine pages to recount its details and then end with another page on the area's subsequent history, rather than showing how Muir's campaign was influenced by Wordsworth and Emerson? Why furnish five pages of detail on the meteorological consequences of two volcanic eruptions--Mount Laki in 1783-84 and Tambora in 1815--when the chapter that includes this description aims primarily to compare White's approach to meteorology with that of Wordsworth? And why eight pages on Muir's glaciology, a topic already well-documented elsewhere? A clearer sense of what Hall aimed to add to existing scholarship would have helped him avoid such unproductive tangents. Above all, to buttress its central claim that we should view writers such as
Wordsworth and Emerson primarily as naturalists, the book could have focused more rigorously on the specific contexts and practices of Romantic naturalism, and it could have developed its accounts of influence more extensively and more substantially.

I must end by saying that this book is not without merit. Hall has gathered a wide range of useful information from a variety of sources, and in setting out to examine the links between Romantic writers on both sides of the Atlantic and to show the influence of Romantic naturalism on the formation of environmentalism, he has undertaken a useful and important project. Readers who are relatively new to green Romanticism and transatlantic influences will find a wealth of interesting information and connections throughout the book, although often without sufficient evidence from primary sources or engagement with secondary scholarship to back up its big assertions. Readers already versed in the topics of this book may find themselves asking what it adds to existing scholarship in many areas, and wishing for more theoretical nuance in its account of the relations between Romantic naturalism, culture, and environmentalism.

Scott Hess is Associate Professor of English and Environmental Studies at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana.