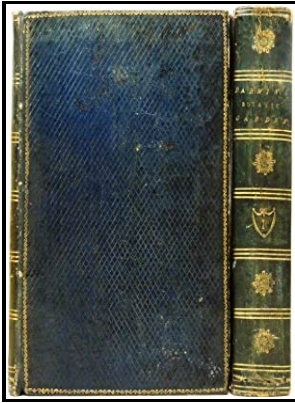


Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic poets

St. Martins Press - Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets



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Erasmus Darwin: Was Charles Darwin's theory of evolution foretold by his grandfather's poetry?

The acorn is encoded with the genetic information that will form the oak.

The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times: Priestman, Martin: localize-ing.justmote.me.au: Books

Although Darwin himself was an abolitionist, the social Darwinist ideas inspired by his work contributed to some of the most racist and classist social programs of the last 150 years. However, Darwin took this faith to an unusual extreme in *The Botanic Garden*, proposing that European nations stage an international intervention in a contemporary climate crisis. In 1756 he settled in Lichfield as a physician, where he often treated poor patients free of charge.

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Charles enumerated the details of evolution, but Erasmus anticipated its broad outlines; the younger Darwin wrote in prose, and the elder imagined in poetry, arguably the most significant scribbler of scientific verse in English, a sadly neglected genre. As Klingender notes, The importance of Erasmus Darwin for the intellectual history of the last decade of the eighteenth century rests on his didactic poems.

The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times

Darwin follows this with more vivid description of the electrical storm that shows that he can effectively set a natural scene: Thus when on wanton wing intrepid Love Snatch'd the raised lightning from the arm of Jove; Quick o'er his knee the triple bolt he bent, The cluster'd darts and forked arrows rent. The Climate of Great Britain; Or, Remarks on the Changes it has Undergone, Particularly Within the Last Fifty Years. This same vitality--essentially a Romantic trait--runs throughout *The Economy of Vegetation* where Darwin's purpose is to mythologize the achievements of his scientific contemporaries.

Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets

In his bestselling *Cosmos*, for example, Carl Sagan writes, The early universe was filled with radiation and a plenum of matter, originally hydrogen and helium, formed from elementary particles in the dense primeval.

The Darwin before Darwin: Erasmus Darwin, visionary science, and romantic poetry.

Nor were all such associations critical. By Darwin's time it was becoming evident that the universe was much older than previously thought--his own studies made this abundantly apparent--so he expressed this in his poetic exploration of the cosmos and the biosphere.

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