The Nature of Rousseau's 'Rêveries'

physical, human, aesthetic

Series:
SVEC
Volume:
2008:03

VolumeEditors:
John C. O'Neal

Publication Date:
2008
ISBN:
978-0-7294-0928-5

Research on Rousseau's innovative last work is changing direction. Long situated in a context of autobiographical writing, its moral and philosophical content is now a major critical preoccupation. *The Nature of Rousseau's 'Rêveries': physical, human, aesthetic* brings together the work of international specialists to explore new approaches to the defining feature - the 'nature' - of the *Rêveries*.

In essays which range from studies of botany or landscape painting to thematic or stylistic readings, authors re-examine Rousseau's intellectual understanding of and personal relationship with different conceptions of nature. Drawing connections between this text and earlier theoretical writings, authors analyse not only the philosophical and personal implications of Rousseau's reflections on the outer world but also and his attempts to examine and validate both his own nature and that of 'l'homme naturel'.

In *The Nature of Rousseau's 'Rêveries': physical, human, aesthetic* the contributors offer new insights into the character of Rousseau’s last major work and suggest above all its experimental, elusive quality, hovering between inner and outer worlds, escape and fulfilment, experience and writing. They underline the unique richness of the *Rêveries*, a work to be situated not simply at the end of Rousseau’s life, but at the very centre of his thought.

List of tables

List of illustrations
John C. O’Neal, Introduction

I. Nature in Rousseau’s Rêveries

Alexandra Cook, The ‘Septième promenade’ of the Rêveries: a peculiar account of Rousseau’s botany?

Alexandra Cook, Appendix

Dorothy Johnson, Rousseau and landscape painting in France

John c. O’Neal, Nature as refuge in Rousseau’s Rêveries du promeneur solitaire

II. Nature and human nature in Rousseau’s Rêveries

Jean-François Perrin, ‘Les opérations que font les physiciens’: physique de l’homme naturel selon les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire

Jean-Luc Guichet, Nature et origine: l’accident de Ménilmontant

Natasha Lee, A dream of human nature

III. Human nature in Rousseau’s Rêveries

Jacques Berchtold, Le carrosse et le jardinier: nature et dénaturation dans la ‘Deuxième promenade’

Fiona Miller, Forced into freedom: Rousseau’s strange self-portrait in the Rêveries

John T. Scott, Rousseau’s quixotic quest in the Rêveries du promeneur solitaire

Laurence Mall, ‘Dieu est juste; il veut que je souffre; et il sait que je suis innocent’: le problème du mal dans les Rêveries de Rousseau

Sylvie Romanowski, Un étranger pas comme les autres: la voix du maître

Philip Stewart, ‘Ebranlé mais non convaincu’: Rousseau parmi les philosophes

Kevin Inston, Nature as the possibility of change and resistance

Ourida Mostefai, De Vincennes à Ménilmontant: promenade et projet autobiographique dans les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire

Zev Trachtenberg, The exile and the moss-trooper: Rousseau and Thoreau on walking in nature

IV. The formal or aesthetic nature of Rousseau’s Rêveries

James Swenson, The solitary walker and the invention of lyrical prose
The variety of Rousseaus we get here is testimony to the ‘richness and complexity’ of the Rêveries and of Rousseau’s conception of nature.

Eighteenth-century fiction

Laurence Mall’s ground-breaking piece is at once profound, eloquently argued, and well written. [...] This essay deserves to be read by anyone interested in the eighteenth century and should be mandatory reading for all Rousseau scholars.