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Christopher Heppner, *Reading Blake's Designs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi + 302. £45. ISBN 0 521 47381 0.

As Blake has been renovated in the twentieth century primarily by literary critics and historians, so Blake the artist has generally been subordinate to Blake the poet. This process has been further entrenched by the tendency to approach Blake's art from the vantage point of his prophetic books, with the consequence that his art is emphasized where it tends most to breach eighteenth-century aesthetic conventions. When art critics such as Anthony Blunt view Blake's designs, they tend to insist upon his continuity with the art of his contemporaries, Heppner, by concentrating on Blake as an illustrator of other peoples' texts and a history painter, rather than as the engraver of the wholly original (and marginal at the time) prophetic works, offers a reading of Blake's designs which is a perceptive alternative to much literary appraisal. The title, *Reading Blake's Designs*, invites a semiotic mapping of linguistic figures onto Blake's art in order to decode its significance, Heppner identifying the key to this translation as the human figure. Blake, as one of Britain's great portrayers of the figure, inherited two systems of art which traced their legacy to classical antiquity. These systems, naturalism and mannerism, sometimes but not always in opposition, emphasized the torso in intuitive expressions of meaning or the limbs as artificial articulations respectively. The postures of conventionalized mannerism, which Heppner (borrowing a term from Aby Warburg) calls 'pathos formulae', could be powerful and useful tools for conveying compressed information to the viewer but could also degenerate into theatrical distractions. Blake's early paintings of Joseph and his brothers, for example, demonstrate a rather clumsy appropriation of the pathos formulae in which Blake is as close to Poussin as to Michelangelo. Blake frequently used the academic code of gesture, yet he also needed to escape from rigid formulae to achieve his best works. Michelangelo is the primary example of successful appropriation of classical art, but one who in turn creates problems of equal magnitude. Michelangelo's habitual formulaic gestures were subordinated to intuitive postures in which the tension of the whole form signifies an aim and design. From his early engraving of Joseph of Arimathea, 'Michelangelo Blake' attempted (with only partial success) to recuperate the renaissance master who was believed by many to have surpassed the ancients. Part of the problem with using Michelangelo as a model that whilst his art displayed 'an unrivaled ability to draw the human body,' he 'lacked something in the related areas of individualizing figures. . . and of representing them in genuinely dramatic interaction' (p.25). Michelangelo's figures dominate so completely the spaces in which they are located that space becomes virtually meaningless: Blake

could, like Michelangelo, employ this void for spectacular effect, but it could also render his designs rather flat. Another shadow over Blake was that he rarely, if ever, successfully appropriated Michelangelo's ability to convey subtle feeling by kinaesthetic musculature; rather he developed a series of rhetorical gestures demanding explicit readings. Blake simplifies and exaggerates - which, especially in his later career, is the source of his power for encoding meaning. The semiotic of the body becomes dislocated from the actual figure by this process, in particular where there is a tension between image and associated text. Blake relied less on the inherent expressiveness of the figure as time progressed, considering it more and more as a rhetorical vehicle. This was linked, linguistically, to a transition from noun to syntax, to contextual metaphor as the locus of meaning and away from isolated and powerfully articulate bodies to figures surrounded by text. The most dramatic example of this is 'Laocoon', but early examples were prompted by illustrating poets such as Young and Blair, where the design was expected to act in concert with the text. Blake's struggle with the meaning of his art, which could produce such apparently unique works, was in fact shared by many artists who wished for immediate intelligibility from the human figure. The figure was to be vividly expressive, yet artists frequently resorted to historical and mythological names, tags which clarified the body's expression. As a consequence, we should read Blake's designs not merely as extensions of his private mythology, but also as engaging with the public realm of discourse. An example of the confusion surrounding Blake's art, Heppner believes, is evident in interpretations by critics of the *Night Thoughts*. It is easy for critics such as Morton Paley, well-versed in Blake's oeuvre, to replace immediate contexts with remote examples from his prophetic works, but the effect of this is not necessarily enlightening. In contrast to those who read Blake's designs as antagonistic to the author of the *Night Thoughts*, Heppner argues that 'Blake respects the moral intent and actively personifying imagination of Young, but feels free to extend his own commentary on the situations and images presented by the text' (p. 170). Throughout his own readings of Blake's art, Heppner focuses attention on much that - due to the central significance of the prophetic books for modern critics - has come to be seen as marginal but was, in fact, central to Blake's artistic career. As well as continuing the current re-positioning of the artist more within discernible currents of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, Heppner observes that 'Blake was quite capable of thinking and inventing in terms of the structures he found in the texts he was illustrating, without any anxious need to pass them all through the filter of his own myth' (p. 189). In exposing and avoiding this mask, *Reading Blake's Designs* sets the prophetic books in their proper context and removes Blake's art from the tyranny of his prophecy.

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Bryan Shelley, *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel*. Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. Pp. xviii + 212. £30. ISBN 0 19 812284 5. Bryan Shelley's book examines the territory between what he calls 'two opposed misconceptions about Shelley's religious beliefs which have persisted since his death'. He denies either that the poet's diverse speculations on the idea of God may be safely subsumed in the term 'atheism' or that 'he was in some sense a Christian'. Thus he seeks to refute those,

including George Bernard Shaw, who see Shelley as championing an ethical godlessness, by arguing that he 'maintained a conception of divine Being' throughout his life. But, with equal force, he shuns those, like Leigh Hunt, who would have Shelley as a kind of liberation theologian, embracing an ethical outlook essentially Christian in all but name: 'Hunt's Shelley could qualify as a Christian only if Christianity is interpreted as an ethical philosophy divorced from the historic, credal Christian faith'. These arguments have been familiar to Shelley's readers and critics since his writings were first published, and there is a certain intractable, if not circular, quality to them. The strengths of this book emerge from its carefully discriminating readings which negotiate the gap between the deployment of biblical language in Shelley's works and the critical, questioning ends towards which so much of his poetry and prose is directed. In the author's own words, his project is to show how Shelley 'turns biblically informed language against the biblical world-view' by providing 'readings of Shelley's poems in the light of their biblical content'. In his introductory chapter, 'Shelley's 'Gnostic' Assassins and the Reinterpretation of Christianity', he shows himself to be alert, as other critics such as Harold Bloom, James Rieger, and Andrew Welburn have been before him, to the way that the heterodox outlook, particularly evident in the unfinished fragment 'The Assassins' (1814-1815), draws so heavily on Gnostic teachings as to make this fiction a kind of revisionary reading of Scripture, a view of the Christian creed purified of its later accretions. By extension, those very impulses in Shelley's work which seem most at odds with conventional Christianity, including his predisposition towards the Satanic, can be argued to derive from alternatives to orthodoxy available within the spectrum of different versions of Christianity rather than from outside it. This amounts to the (familiar) dialectical argument in Shelley studies that the language of subversion and revolution which he deploys is reliant upon what it ostensibly opposes. But, whether such borrowing is seen as ironical or not, a critical vantage-point of this kind can lead to the glib, though commonly-held, claim (which Bryan Shelley seems very close to making in his Introduction) that Shelley's oppositional thinking can be understood as being already accommodated within the vast range of options contained within the various strands of Biblical exegesis and Christian typology. However, this view of Shelley's project as an exercise in misprision (itself, arguably, a monumental critical misprision), made most innovatively and repetitively by Bloom, is untypical of this book as a whole. What we are presented with more characteristically, is a series of detailed and subtle readings of works which leave intact both the strength of Shelley's refusal of Christianity and his reworking of biblical language in order to express that refusal. Thus, we are shown interestingly, for example, how the concept of Necessity in *Queen Mab* is 'patterned on the biblical Deity', that while 'the message of the mountain' in 'Mont Blanc' is 'one of scepticism', it is a scepticism which can nevertheless be seen to draw on biblical language, and that 'The Triumph of Life' can be seen 'as an inverted apocalypse'. Equally interesting is the book's attention to Shelley's view of Jesus as a prototype of the model revolutionary (evident in his gloss on a passage in the gospel of Luke; 'Magnificent Jacobinism') and to the way his exposure to Catholicism in Italy elicited what is a perceptibly 'Protestant apprehension'. For the most part the book is written with care and a welcome economy. Occasionally its author is a little credulous in supporting

his arguments with quotations from biographical sources of dubious reliability (such as Trelawny and Medwin), and in using the work of antagonists of eighteenth-century atheistical thinking uncritically (for example, the note to the comment that, 'it was reported that to enter [Holbach's] house in Paris, members of his esoteric coterie were required to trample on the Cross' gives the hardly impartial Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* as its source). Through his impressive knowledge of the Bible and of Christian traditions, Bryan Shelley seeks to lend rigour to the debate about Shelley's engagement with religious ideas and language. Undoubtedly we are significantly the richer for the many local insights he provides in this book. But a residual problem remains, perhaps inevitable in such an enterprise as his. To bring to bear upon Shelley's works authoritative knowledge of the Bible and Christianity is to mobilise the cultural authority of the Christian faith in such a way as to neglect the force both of Shelley's insistent and recurrent criticisms of the (ab)uses of such authority (see, for example, his letter to The Editor of *The Examiner* on Richard Carlisle's trial), and of his openness to the language and symbols of non-Christian religions and mythologies (an area explored most notably by Stuart Curran in Shelley's *Annus Mirabilis*). The issue is not so much, then, to acknowledge that either label, 'Christian' or 'atheist', is grossly inadequate if applied simplistically to Shelley's works. It is rather that, even as a book such as this functions as one of several necessary periodic re-evaluations of Shelley's engagement with Christianity, its very scope can seem to have the effect of deferring the proper inquiry into Shelley's search for a language of the spirit devoid of the quest for authority associated with established religions.

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Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (eds.), *Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. xix + 310. Hb £37. Pb £13. ISBN 0 8018 5175 0; 08018 5176 9.

Reading poetry as coded ideology, this well-organized and important collection of essays bears out Stuart Sperry's comment on the back cover that 'The traditional "aesthetic" approach to Shelley is eschewed, with the emphasis very much on Shelley the political and social thinker'. With the exception of a few books and essays (including a fine study by Sperry himself), the 'traditional "aesthetic" approach' to Shelley is, in fact, conspicuous by its absence. The New Critics passed by on the other side; with Deconstruction Shelley's language has been subjected to scrutiny - but often so as to put in question the validity of the 'aesthetic', along with other conceptual categories. The tone of the present volume, based on papers given at the 1992 Shelley conference in New York, is at times messianic in its emphasis on the continuing relevance of Shelley's acts of unacknowledged legislation. But, for the most part, the essays keep their heads, sensibly and intelligently describing aspects of Shelley's achievement and legacy. The book divides into four sections. In the first section, fine essays by Donald Reiman, Greg Kucich, Terence Allan Hoagwood, William Keach, and Mark Kipperman consider 'the nature of the poet's cultural role as Shelley defined it' (p. x). Reiman argues incisively that Shelley's vision is 'existential' (p. 13); Kucich writes acutely about Shelley's dialectical view of history; Hoagwood sees Shelley's work as rousing the reader's faculties to act, as 'designed to induce hermeneutic acts'

(p. 38); Keach enters into subtle dialogue with Jerrold Hogle's account of A Philosophical View of Reform; and Kipperman produces one of the best essays in the collection on Shelley's negotiations between 'a revolutionary nationalism and a humanist universalism' (p. 53). In the second section, five essays 'focus directly on Shelley's own passionate political engagements' (p. xi). Gary Kelly and Annette Wheeler Cafarelli place, in different ways, Shelley's feminism within contemporary contexts, but the most stimulating pieces are Michael Erkelenz's account of the neglected 'Ode to Naples' and Neil Fraistat's essay on 'The Rhetorics of the Early Textual Editions'. Erkelenz stresses the public nature of Shelley's 'Pindaric ode' (p. 63) which the poet published in a timely and targeted fashion as he sought to turn 'an aristocratic genre back upon the interest of the aristocrats' (p. 72). Fraistat sees in the early editions of Shelley's poetry a Manichean ideological war being fought between 'authorized' and 'illegitimate' versions of the poet. Whether all Mary Shelley's 'editorial efforts' with regard to Shelley's work can be described as the deliberate 'etherealizing and disembodiment' (p. 106) that Fraistat discerns is arguable; she certainly kept alive Shelley's bitterly forgiving attack on the Lord Chancellor, 'Thy country's curse is on thee', in several transcriptions. But Fraistat's essay is a significant contribution to the reception history of the poet's work. Finally, Bouthaina Shaaban is informative about Shelley and the Chartists. In sections three and four, the collection concentrates, respectively, on 'Shelley and Other Cultures' and 'Shelley and Contemporary Thought'. There is a great deal of interest and liveliness here. Especially stimulating in section three are E. Douka Kabitoglou's subtle discussion of 'freedom' in Hellas, a poem just beginning to attract the attention it deserves, and Lilla Maria Crisafulli Jones's engrossing account of 'Shelley's Impact on Italian Literature'. Alan Weinberg writes about Shelley's relevance ('Let us believe in an optimism in which we are our own gods') to South Africa's troubled but hope-enkindling recent history, and Steven Jones successfully juxtaposes Shelley's 'The Mask of Anarchy' and Brecht's imitation, *Der anachronistische Zug oder Freiheit und Demokratie*. Section four contains some of the most intellectually strenuous and intriguing material in the volume, including Andrew Bennett's historical-cum--deconstructive reading of the figuration of posterity in Shelley's work, Tilottama Rajan's illuminating account of 'narrative' in Shelley's Gothic fiction, and Arkady Plotnitsky's ground-breaking 'All Shapes of Light: The Quantum Mechanical Shelley'. All the essays in this book are well written and repay reading. It's just a shame that, somehow, the poetry too often gets squeezed out.

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Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. 307. £40. ISBN 0 521 4974 8. Keith Hanley, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of William Wordsworth*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf/Prentice hall, 1995. Pp. 329. £65. ISBN 0 13 355348 5. Duncan Wu's indefatigable research continues the work of his first volume, on Wordsworth's reading from 1770 to 1799, and its four hundred or so further entries will further dispel the old view that Wordsworth read little. Wu admittedly includes absolutely everything; every level of prominence of writer; reviews of Wordsworth's own work; and items with only an outside chance of having actually been read. Evidence for this last

may be at times tenuous, but Wu's Preface makes clear that anything with a ghost of a claim must be included. Certainly there is nothing one would want to omit. Many entries contain more than one work. Because of their range and varying size (some a single short poem, others a writer's entire oeuvre), generalizing is difficult. However an impressionistic count shows, first and unsurprisingly, that a great deal was poetry. Fifty or so entries up to (roughly) Milton; more unexpectedly, another fifty on poets writing well within Wordsworth's lifetime, often names today wholly forgotten. The earlier and seventeenth century poets are a full and predictable list, lacking most markedly however Henry Vaughan of whom no trace appears in Wordsworth's work. Since this also applies to Thomas Traherne, undiscovered until our own time, no precursorship for the 'Immortality Ode' can be claimed for them. For lesser-known names Wu is somewhat dependent on Wordsworth's letter of September 1814 to Robert Anderson, recommending additions to the latter's anthology of English poets. However this letter was unsolicited so is perhaps fair evidence. Among poets from Wordsworth's own time are William Gilbert, James Grahame, Richard Payne Knight, John Logan, William Sotheby, Joseph Sympson and Laura Sophia Temple, whose verses 'did her considerable credit' as Wordsworth wrote to Josiah Wade in 1806. This entry, with similar ones, modifies the view (not itself without foundation) that Wordsworth's attitude to women poets was occasionally chauvinistic. Indeed, he is more loyal to current rivals than his oft-noted aloofness might suggest. Lamb tells of how Wordsworth took Godwin's statement that all new poetry is old poetry 'new vamped, and delivered to us at second, or twentieth hand'. 'In great wrath' (Lamb) the poet scrawled across it 'That is false, William Godwin. Signed William Wordsworth' (p.94). Then there is the resource material probably read mainly for writing *The Excursion* and trying to write *The Recluse*. Ten or so on science include Coleridge's friend Sir Humphrey Davy, Kenelm Digby, Erasmus Darwin, William Withering's botanical study of British plants (1796), and Francois Huber on bees (1806). Nine or ten on the Lakes and Westmoreland/Cumbria include Richard Warner (1802), Thomas West (1807), Thomas Wilkinson (which Wordsworth read before publication) and John Housman (1802). The prominent travel entries - more than thirty - contain all those listed by Livingston Lowes as used by Coleridge in subliminally producing 'Kubla Khan', a poem Wordsworth seems to have scarcely ever referred to. Purchas, Bruce, du Bartas, Bartram appear here, as more widely do Mungo Park, James Robertson, Thomas Nicholson, John Ledyard (on Captain Cook), Richard Hakluyt, and Count Alexander Labourde's *A View of Spain* (1809). Wordsworth's school and Cambridge education take him to each of Homer, Plato, Pliny, Plutarch, Euripides, Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Quintilian, Herodotus, Cicero, Lucan, Dante, Tasso, Boccaccio and Michelangelo whose sonnets he translated, although Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes are notably absent. As Wu reminds us, Wordsworth's Greek was distinctly smaller than his Latin. The twenty-odd works of history include Gibbon, studies of Edward Hyde, Gustavus Adolphus (King of Sweden) and others. Philosophy finds Descartes, Hartley of course, von Humboldt, Voltaire and Lessing, while religious reading ranges from the Bible itself (endearingly referred to by Wu as 'this work') through Donne's sermons, Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Browne and others down to numerous current defences of God's goodness, creation and manifestations in national institutional life. Of course,

many of these entries imply little more than an evening's fireside reading - usually noted by Dorothy - when only part of a work, perhaps just a passage, is cited. Thirty-odd periodicals of the day are entered. One of the richnesses of this book is that Wu's evidence for each item accrues into much of critical or biographical value. Sources for Wordsworth's own work abound. Quintilian and Sir Joshua Reynolds behind the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, Edmund Spenser's 'Colin Clout Comes Home Again' behind 'The world is too much with us', Isaac Walton's *The Compleat Angler* behind 'The White Doe of Rylstone', Vicesimus Knox behind 'Babes in the Wood', and the strange bedfellows of Virgil and Tom Jones behind 'Michael'. Wordsworth's obverse penchant for down-putting is also evident. He is anti-Malthus, criticises the poetry of Southey (who praises his own) and rubbishes Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Yet he 'may have never read a word of Fichte'. (p.873). High comedy comes from Hazlitt's review of *The Excursion* and Wordsworth's reading of Richard Mant's lake-satire *The Simpliciad*. However, Wordsworth will frequently write to a fellow-poet praising his/her book, or single poem. This book is at once an exhaustive work full of suggestive items on Wordsworth's perennial preoccupations, and a compendium of vivid sightings of the poet's active writing life.

Keith Hanley's critical bibliography is equally compendious and impressive. It acknowledges, while superceding its half-dozen predecessors, and contains a) all editions whole or part of Wordsworth's work (over a hundred plus 'selections' of various kinds; b) reference works, bibliographies, chronologies, topographies, concordances; c) biographies and memoirs, d) criticism. This last takes up four-fifths of the book. The 'Advice to the Reader', more of an apologia, is scrupulously economic and detailed. There are some omissions. Virtually all entries are in English. Works by the family are included, except for much of brother Christopher's massive academic output. Articles later appearing in books are omitted. Ninety percent of all the family papers are at Grasmere, but venues of the rest, mainly in the the USA, are listed. Complete editions of the poetry since the poet's death run from the Macmillan Globe of 1888 down to our two of today, the two-volume Penguin/Yale edition of John O.Hayden, and the Cornell Wordsworth still appearing. Debate about this latter project still hovers, stemming from Jack Stillinger's questioning the promotion of 'other versions preliminary to the one that we think (Wordsworth) wanted us to read' (p.276). This one is difficult. To leave evidence unused is to offend the scholar's Hippocratic oath; yet the poem moves to its telos which might make this invidious. Entries on all these editions plus prose, letters, family works and the rest, with details of content, layout, alternative readings, illustrations, transcriptions, location and other items, run to thirty-four pages. The 'Aids To Research' list follows, the biographical section a roll-call of Wordsworthiana: Hazlitt, De Quincey, Christopher Wordsworth, Rawnsley, Knight, Legouis, Leslie Stephen et al., ending appropriately with the 'Standard Biographies', here three not two, for Moorman and Gill are rather curiously accompanied by Richard J. Onorato's psychoanalytical study of 1971. The many important extras include G.M. Harper, Edith Batho, the often overlooked Frederika Beatty, John E. Jordan on Wordsworth and De Quincey, F.E. Halliday, and Nicholas Roe's radical years of more recent date. The nineteenth-century critical section lists works which,

in effect, replace the 'Critical Heritage' Wordsworth which never appeared. Hanley gives succinct and useful summaries here, not least of Francis Jeffrey, James Montgomery, John Wilson, C.H. Townsend, Henry Taylor, Stopford Brooke, W.J.Courthope, A.C.Swinburne and various anons, as well as Hazlitt, Coleridge, Mill, Arnold, Pater, Ruskin and the rest. The forty-odd collections of essays on Wordsworth from individual one-offs through to such as Macmillan's Casebooks, list and usually offer a couple of lines on every essay included - a mammoth achievement. Finally there is the roughly post-World War II criticism we know and love; over a hundred full-length studies and nearly five hundred articles and book chapters. The problem for the bibliographer is to present this neutrally for useful reference but with some starting evaluative orientation. Hanley works by a simple hierarchy of single epithets, or none, given to each work's summary. 'Important', 'influential', 'major' or none at all are most frequent; some are 'challenging', 'rigorous' etc, with 'brilliant', 'masterly' or 'magisterial' for a very few at the top. Special terms as different as 'feminist', 'detailed', 'philosophical', 'pioneering', 'deconstructionist', 'comparative' and many others occur also. As to length, there is much variation, but it seems tied to date, established renown and complexity rather than the editor's view of merit. Apart from Hartman (1964) full-length studies prior to 1980 get short entries. Then longer ones follow for Kenneth R. Johnson on *The Recluse*, Mary Jacobus's feminist essays, Alan Liu, Nicholas Roe, Richard Bourke and some others. By some miracle, nearly a hundred articles/chapters get half a page each, two hundred more a third or so. Of course the contents are familiar to Wordsworthians. But taken all together, one is struck by the range of aspects written on this poet in our era. Single poems or passages short or long, groups or types of poems, theoretical approaches, ground axes, linguistic niceties, Lakeland solitaires or the geology they live on, family relationships, comparisons with painting and picturesque, depth psychoanalysis, eccentricities, straight accountings, politics, culture, the poet's crises or those of his time. All the big guns are present (alphabetically from Jonathans Bate to Wordsworth and a massive American presence) but Hanley is neither sycophant nor iconoclast. The Ph.D student or anyone else new to the field could hardly be better served - if they can afford it. Quite obviously, every higher education library needs both these works.

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Howard Erskine-Hill, Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Pp. xii + 272. £35. ISBN 0 19 812177 6. In an epilogue, the author of this book declares that his purpose has been, 'in a series of detailed readings, to show the political awareness which belongs to poetry of the most complex and subtle kind' (p. 255). He more than succeeds, for he not only provides illuminating criticism of Wordsworth, Johnson, Pope and Dryden, tracing their engagement with political issues at the levels of allusion, imagery and form, but also revises our understanding of their relationship to each other and to classical poetry. For students of Romanticism it is the resultant redefinition of Wordsworth that is of greatest interest. In a concluding chapter which comprehends in its sweep *An Evening Walk*, *The Borderers* and the 1799, 1805 and 1850 *Prelude*, Erskine-Hill demonstrates that, as was the case with Johnson, Dryden and Pope, the profundity of Wordsworth's political poetry deepened in accordance

with an increasingly sophisticated reworking of motifs derived from Juvenal and Virgil. Without ever underestimating the considerable difference between Wordsworth and his eighteenth-century predecessors, Erskine-Hill shows that, like them, Wordsworth developed in response to a Latin tradition verse capable of assessing the human costs of political defeat. Careful not to claim Wordsworth as an Augustan, he nevertheless reminds us that the treatment in *The Prelude* of the French Revolution is affiliated to eighteenth-century poetic opposition to the 1688 English Revolution as well as anxiously influenced by Milton's earlier meditation upon revolutionary failure. The *Dunciad* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are discussed at length in the context of their authors' opposition to the political consequences of 1688. In an argument that is likely to renew a controversy in which he is already engaged, Erskine-Hill suggests that Jacobite sympathies are detectable in Pope's and Johnson's verse at the level of oblique allusion. Comparing their verse with the language of Jacobite pamphlets and Patriot propaganda, he convincingly restores to light a political context in which apparently general allusions were simultaneously read as references to contemporary political figures and positions. He then shows how, at their best, Pope, Dryden and Johnson, interwove such specific references with more general meditations on power so as to force a re-examination, rather than a simple endorsement, of political motives and loyalties. It is *The Prelude* which emerges most clearly from this book as a great political poem, not least because Erskine-Hill shows how Wordsworth achieves in it, at the levels of form and imagery as well as allusion, that re-examination of which his eighteenth-century poets had proved capable. He traces the image of the horse as it appears and reappears in the poem, showing that it acquires political valency as a result not only of its immediate contexts, but also of its resemblance to the equine imagery of the Bible and of Virgil. And as Wordsworth alludes to his own use of the image earlier in his poem, he begins to create a consciousness of political change and revision in its very form. Erskine-Hill shows in detail how this occurs and in the process refocuses our understanding of the Furness Abbey and Leven Sands episodes, showing that in these famous passages the image of the horse invokes experiences of popular energies and communal participation unperverted by the institutionalization of power. Despite its (brief) attack upon new historicism and its controversial detection of Jacobitism in Pope and Johnson, *Poetry of Opposition and Revolution* wears its argument lightly. Not the least of its virtues is the sense it gives the reader that a genuine exploration of poetry is taking place, the result of which has not been determined in advance by a pre-existing critical position. This exploratory process cumulatively gives its conclusion great weight, so that it attains about poetry 'the many-sided and many-sighted understanding' (p. 255) that it shows great poets to possess about politics and history.

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Matthew Bell, *Goethe's Naturalistic Anthropology: Man and Other Plants*. Oxford Modern Languages and Literatures Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. Pp. 346. £40. ISBN 0 19 815894 7. This wide-ranging study of Goethe's work as a novelist, poet, dramatist and scientist has as its focus the writer's 'anthropology'. This is by no means so narrow as it might sound, for the term 'anthropology' is to be understood in its broadest

sense as Pope's 'proper study of mankind' -- man as a thinking, feeling, creating and social being -- and thus it encompasses not just diverse scientific disciplines such as psychology, physiology, natural history etc. but cultural history also. An impressive opening chapter, a valuable review of the position of anthropology as a science central to the project of the Enlightenment, locates the younger Goethe in the context of the controversial issues raised by the new spirit of enquiry, in particular the problem of linking accepted moral values to the results of scientifically detached procedures. Of particular relevance to Bell is Goethe's novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* of 1774 and its revision a decade later, and the second chapter undertakes a reading of the novel as a specifically psychological work which reveals the strongly anti-cartesian direction of Goethe's thought. Chapter 3 contains a truly excellent account of the impact on Goethe's development of his collaboration with Herder, Knebel and Einsiedel, and here Bell undertakes a subtle investigation of the changes in the underlying anthropology of the first version of the Wilhelm Meister novel, the *Theatralische Sendung*, and the published version, the *Lehrjahre* completed in 1796. The fourth chapter investigates the relation between Goethe's work as a scientist in the 1790s and the aesthetic theories he was developing under the impact of Schiller's friendship and the latter's advocacy of Kantian critical theory. The final chapter looks at Goethe's empirical psychology and its manifestation and operation in that deeply enigmatic novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. This chapter confirms a pattern evident from the earlier reading of *Werther*: Bell demonstrates an impressive grasp of ideas and issues in intellectual history and expounds them with vigour and clarity, but when it comes to working out the implications for Goethe's specifically literary works, his readings carry less conviction. The book ends somewhat abruptly and would have benefitted from a longer conclusion, but it is greatly to Bell's credit that one is left wanting more. It is impossible to do justice in such a short review to the wealth of ideas in this book and the light they shed on Goethe's diverse productions. Given the undoubted merits of the work, then, it is sad to have to conclude this review with a serious caveat. In a work published by the Clarendon Press one expects to be able to rely on the accuracy of quotations. Regrettably, this is not the case here. One major problem concerns quotations from the Weimar edition of Goethe's works, the standard edition still despite its age, and the one mainly referred to by the author. What appears to have happened is that, in transcribing, the author has unconsciously (and therefore inconsistently) switched to modern norms of orthography and punctuation. The majority of the inaccuracies, therefore, do not greatly impinge upon the sense: they might typically involve the dropping of the now defunct 'h' from words such as *Gemhth* or *Noth*, the omission of 't' from *Todt*, a modern 'k' instead of Goethe's 'c' or 'ck', and so on. Likewise in matters of punctuation, the errors do not usually affect the sense: Goethe will frequently omit a comma where modern German demands one, or use a semi-colon where nowadays a comma is preferred. But the sheer volume of the inaccuracies indicates that no rigorous checking of the quotations has taken place, and at the worse end of the spectrum the inaccuracies are many and serious. On page 309, for example, a 15-line quotation from *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* has some twelve inaccuracies including three points at which whole phrases have disappeared from the original, 'denn' has become 'den' affecting the sense, and an exclamation mark is used instead of a

questionmark. A check on quotations from the Hamburg edition confirms that the problem, though less frequent there, is not confined to the older edition. I did not extend these checks beyond the two editions I keep on my bookshelves at home, but one has to conclude that no quotation in the book can be relied on with confidence. It is remarkable enough that the Press's editing procedures should have failed so disastrously here, but it is all the stranger because the book is basically the author's D.Phil. thesis, and it would be surprising if these errors had swarmed in only after the stage of supervision and examination. One cannot avoid the observation that unreliability of quotation in a scholarly work is a cardinal sin, and the state of the quotations in this volume is a disgrace and constitutes a very grave blemish on what should have been a distinguished contribution to Goethe studies in England.

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Bruce Woodcock and John Coates, *Combative Styles: Romantic Writing and Ideology: Two Contrasting Interpretations*. Hull: The University of Hull Press, 1995. Pp. 151. Pb. £8.95. ISBN 0 85958 621 9 As its title suggests, the idea of textual contest is the organising principle of this book. The 'combative styles' in question are, most obviously, those of the leading participants in the Revolution controversy. But the idea of contention is extended to take in more recent controversies in the spheres of critical practice and historical interpretation. Implicit, but imperfectly realised, in the scheme of the book is a debate between its co-authors on the politics and protocols of reading. Although their approaches (and indeed styles) differ, Woodcock and Coates share a preoccupation with the ways in which style works on and through ideology. Coates's two chapters on style and political allegiance in Burke and De Quincey give special prominence to the place of inherited discourses, notably the traditions of classical rhetoric, in conservative polemic. Defending the first of Burke's Letters on a Regicide Peace against charges of stylistic instability and incoherence, Coates stresses conscious artistry, unity of design, and the masterly orchestration of a diversity of local rhetorical effects. According to this reading, Burke's late style is not as startlingly innovative, or aberrant, or uncontrolled, as it may appear. Indeed, Coates sees its 'polysemous, multi-dimensional effects' (p. 53) specifically as a purposeful product of Burke's classicism, revealing his debt to the example of Demosthenean oratory as a model of public address at a moment of national emergency. Developing this argument, he makes out a particularly intriguing and convincing case for reading the animated discourse of the Letters on a Regicide Peace as a repudiation of Pitt's parliamentary style which, Burke felt, failed to embody his own sense of historical crisis and consequently failed a crucial test of political leadership. One objection to this cogent account of Burke is that the criterion of formal unity which seems to inform it necessarily leads Coates to understate the experimental, transformative, and unstable elements of style which so struck contemporary (as well as modern) readers. In his chapters on Paine and Blake, Woodcock is more willing to trace the significance and effects of textual discontinuity. In a refreshingly wide-ranging discussion of Paine, for example, he examines the 'fugitive influences' (p. 84) or diverse cultural materials which shape Rights of Man and related writings. Against the received view of Paine's style as distinctively rational and plain speaking, Woodcock highlights its combination of millenarian

excitement and demotic humour. Drawing on Iain McCalman's work, he repositions Paine within the popular political culture of the articulate tavern and artisan debating club. This interpretation has much to recommend it. But if the portrait of Paine as quintessentially an Enlightenment man of reason and citizen of the world is unconvincing - and Woodcock is surely right to contest it - enough of that ambition, and that style, remains to complicate the alternative view presented here of Paine as the product and representative of a vibrant 'street-culture' (p. 91). This is a short book but each of its four main chapters offers fresh and valuable ways of thinking about rhetorical contest and the political imagination in the 1790s and beyond. The book's projected readership, however, is unclear. The essays of interpretation, reprinted from academic journals and conference papers, presuppose a reader already familiar with the texts of Burke, Paine, Blake, and De Quincey and critical arguments about them but the introduction, which is largely given over to biographical sketches and summaries, seems to address someone coming to this material for the first time. A second difficulty with the book is that its stated ambition to stage an ideological and interpretative combat between its co-authors is not fully achieved. Put simply, the terms of that debate are not made sufficiently explicit. As it stands, the book ends eloquently but inconclusively with a chapter on De Quincey, without developing and debating the political and methodological issues which set its authors apart. Instructive differences, such as the contrast between Coates's insistence on 'the otherness of past periods' (p. 51) and Woodcock's tendency towards historical analogy and a reading of Romantic ideology from the standpoint of the politics of the present, would have been fruitful ground for such an exchange. What one misses most from this volume of 'contending essays' (p. 36), then, is a sustained and constructive dialogue between its authors: a testing, through argument, of the truth of Burke's maxim that 'Our antagonist is our helper'.

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Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp 251. £35. ISBN 0 521 55455 1. One of the reasons why it took the British so long to realise that wealth was not synonymous with ownership of land was the presence of a third, unspoken but always acknowledged constituent in the equation: power. Long after the first Reform Bill, and long after land was no longer as productive a source of real income as banking or manufacturing, it continued to provide immediate and visible local status--with corresponding expression of that 'influence' in Parliament. Though Fulford does not take his argument so far, stopping with the early Coleridge round about 1800, this book provides ample explanation for attitudes that were to persist well into the nineteenth century - and even in places up to the First World War. For Fulford, changing eighteenth-century attitudes towards nature -- the very stuff of traditional romanticism -- cannot be understood without first understanding their economic or political concomitants. But the question of 'who owns the land?' is, of course, more complicated than a question of title-deeds. To begin with, the poets and artists who celebrated the beauties of landscape, like the gardeners, engineers, and 'improvers' who, more often than not, had actually created it, were rarely the legal owners of it. Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight were indeed

gentleman landowners; Repton was a failed landowner, forced to earn his living by remodelling the estates of others; Lancelot ('Capability') Brown was eventually to purchase his own estate; but Gainsborough, Constable, Gilpin, Thomson, Cowper, Wordsworth, Coleridge and the host of other landscape improvers, painters, poets, and guidebook writers who influenced the ever-shifting patterns of public taste during the century were themselves landless, and their attitudes towards landscape were influenced by very different considerations. At one extreme, like Jonson and Marvell in the previous century, they celebrated the wise and beneficent ownership of others. Fulford quotes Stephen Daniels to the effect that art could serve to codify the owners' economic and political interests in terms of their landscape. Yet co-existing with such eulogies was always the possibility of reproach: that owners were neglecting their land (and, often under that heading, the rights or needs of tenant farmers, smallholders, and cottagers involved). At the other extreme, the answer to the question of 'ownership' could be subversive and even Jacobinical, to be answered in terms not of title-deeds, but of who worked the land, or even (an answer long predating the National Trust) who used that land for aesthetic, recreational, and touristic purposes. To a greater or less degree, all these answers are present in Fulford's book, together with a metaphoric geography (who is capable of holding the 'commanding heights', of taking an 'overview', of laying out the terrain) but perhaps the most interesting group is a new and emerging class of 'independent' artist whose attitude to landscape is not influenced by aristocratic patronage so much as their need to use landscape as a source of personal domination. Most striking here is Fulford's discussion of that Tory son of a landless Lichfield bookseller, Samuel Johnson. Just as his Dictionary may be seen as an attempt to establish himself as somehow the rightful 'owner' of the language, giving an overview of the words used by others as, perforce, his 'tenants and cottagers', so, for Fulford, Johnson's much-debated tour of the Highlands, is nothing less than an attempt to extend that title-deed by re-writing Scotland in 'loyal English'. His suspicion of Gaelic (which Fulford, oddly, following Wordsworth's mistake, calls 'Erse' throughout) and of Macpherson's Ossian, was fuelled by an antagonism towards a language and sources essentially outside his lordly control. From here it is but a short step to that other landless figure, the treatment of whose family by the aristocracy, compounded with first-hand indoctrination with the ideals of the French Revolution, combined to produce a no less fierce use of the landscape to proclaim his artistic and moral independence: William Wordsworth. His reverse-progress from apologist of the independent Cumberland peasant 'statesman' to defender of the Lowther 'interest', so often condemned by later, politically indignant, critics, is here discussed with impartial attention to the origins and force of the arguments involved. Much of the strength of Fulford's argument lies in his close and sensitive reading of particular texts, together with a good sense of historical background -- which only occasionally slips (as when Joseph Johnson is described as the publisher of the Lyrical Ballads). This book will, I suspect, prove controversial in its attempt to restore a strong dose of political and psychological realism to discussions of eighteenth-century landscape -- an area whose high ground has long been held by aesthetic arguments.

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Peter Martin, Edmond Malone, Shakespearean Scholar. A Literary Biography. Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought 25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. 298p. £40. ISBN 0 521 46030 1

Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers will find none of it in Peter Martin's intuitive and impressive inquiry into the life and work of the eighteenth-century Shakespearean scholar, Edmond Malone. Anyone who was to choose Malone as a subject had to follow S. Schoenbaum's entertaining portrait in his *Shakespeare's Lives*, and Martin's study is not a disappointment. Indeed, in Martin, Malone finds a modern editor with something of his own instincts and skills. Martin's book is thoroughly researched and presented in a lively and invigorating prose, which identifies the methodology of an eighteenth-century editor and researcher, and at the same time reveals Malone to be a literary detective who exposed fakers and forgers. Martin also provides his reader with glimpses into the lives of notable eighteenth-century figures, such as Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, Joshua Reynolds, and fellow Irish man Edmund Burke. Malone had an independent income, which meant he did not have to earn a living, but allowed him to have the 'freedom to immerse himself completely in English literary history'. He nearly became a barrister, but boredom directed him away from litigation to the library in 'the enthusiastic pursuit of archival documents,' taking him from London to the Bodleian Cambridge and Stratford. What made Malone different from other scholars was that he was his willingness to seek out documents in places that other scholars had not thought of looking. His correspondence, for example, with the Stratford clergyman, Revd James Davenport, and his decision to search records in Stratford, helped him find out details of Shakespeare's boyhood and parents' lives. Malone also discovered Sir Henry Herbert's Office Book and the accounts of Philip Henslowe. Indeed, Martin tells us that Malone discovered more facts about Shakespeare's life than 'were known before or discovered since'. For example, it is thanks to Malone that we know that Shakespeare's son was called Hamnet and not Samuel.

Malone has his place in the intense rivalry which took place between eighteenth-century Shakespearean editors. He was constantly critical of his adversary George Steevens, whom William Gifford had once described as the 'Puck of commentators'. Taking to task previous editors of Shakespeare's work such as Warburton and Steevens, Malone attempted to produce a more comprehensive and informed edition which meant printing commentaries that contained dialogue and disagreements with previous editors. He was the first editor to include the poems in his edition and he also attempted to date the plays by identifying allusions to contemporary events in them. Later in life he attempted the labourious task of producing both a portable edition of Shakespeare's plays and an octavo edition. Yet, Malone's talents did not stop at writing biography and editing. He also unmasked eighteenth-century Shakespearean forgers. He was to rather unkindly accuse the actor Charles Macklin, then in his nineties, of forgery, but he also exposed the Stratford forger, John Jordan. However his coup d' éclat was to be the uncovering of Henry Ireland's counterfeiting of Shakespearean papers. From the start Malone was suspicious of Ireland's claim to have authentic documents relating to Shakespeare, and was determined to get hold of them to reveal Ireland's fraud.

Through his knowledge of handwriting, history of theatre, printing and the dating of the plays, he was easily able to point to numerous errors including the numbering of lines which was unprecedented in Shakespeare's lifetime. Martin's admiration for the work of Malone prevents him adopting a critical attitude towards Malone's approach to Shakespearean texts, for this the reader will have to go to Margaretta De Grazia's admirable *Shakespeare Verbatim*, which tends to analyse Malone's editing skills from a twentieth-century point of view on editing. Martin's book is not only of interest to those researching the eighteenth century, particularly Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, but those interested in the history of textual editing. It is also as an excellent example of life writing and scholarship. Martin criticizes another eighteenth-century editor, Edward Cappell, for his inability to write 'crisp straightforward English' - Martin does not have this problem himself.

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Orrin N. C. Wang, *Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. 232. £32. ISBN 0 8018 5220 X. The notion of modernity did not originate with the Romantics. In Orrin Wang's view, though, it is in the Romantic period that ideas of modernity are for the first time routinely accompanied by a scepticism regarding the grounding of historical difference; modernity thereby becomes a provisional, makeshift, 'fantastic' construction. It is this that links Romanticism, itself a posthumous literary-historical artefact, to postmodern theory, which stresses the constructedness of all knowledge, and this link provides the motive force of Wang's book. Wang's discussion of Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' provides an early critical trial of these abstract speculations. The urn synecdochically invokes the neo-Hellenic revival of Keats's age, but, appearing as it does in the transition from private to collective (museum) ownership of cultural capital, it interpellates the aesthetic consumer in equivocal ways. Keats discovers in it a symbol of his modernity, yet seems unable to define the boundaries of that moment: the urn, it seems, will only come into its own as aesthetic object once the present generation has passed, but how is that to be determined? The poem is thus caught between 'the assertion of genuine historical change' and 'a radical historical undecidability'. Wang parallels this to a double-bind in Fredric Jameson's well-known essay on postmodernism as 'The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. This particular alliance of Romantic modernity and postmodern theory seems something of a shotgun marriage, but Wang has better examples up his sleeve. Each subsequent chapter begins by addressing a particular theoretical school through a single 'representative figure', then turns to consider a literary writer whom the critic has appropriated for her/his own ends. In De Manian style, Wang finds elements of blindness in the critics' handling of their literary forebears which he, via a more 'dialectical' interfacing of theory and text, can use to produce richer insights. And De Man it is, indeed, who is the object of Wang's first extended scrutiny. The author demonstrates how De Man's celebrated essay, 'Rhetoric of Temporality', puts forward an alternative literary history of Romanticism centred on allegory rather than symbol, whilst simultaneously arguing the impossibility of a historical consciousness when faced with the ironic disjunction between language and world. Taking up De Man's notorious reading of Shelley's

'Triumph of Life', Wang avers that he underrates the canniness of the poem's use of tropes of disfiguration - a point he cunningly underlines by referring to De Man's similar argument about Derrida's reading of Rousseau. For Wang, 'The Triumph of Life' splendidly enacts the blind progress of historical understanding, and helps repair the oversights in De Man's essay. The remaining chapters in *Fantastic Modernity* all contain interesting material. There are some stringent criticisms of the Romantic new historicism of the 1980s, of which the showpiece is a clinical demolition of the Heine chapter in Jerome McGann's *Romantic Ideology*, demonstrating that McGann falsifies Heine's reading of Uhland in order to fabricate a model of good historicist criticism - but ironically one that negates Heine's actual historical insights so as to rescue the 'progressive futurity' of Uhland's poetry. In the arena of feminist Romantic studies, Wang cannot find a 'representative figure' to put alongside Mary Wollstonecraft - a situation he attributes partly to feminist resistance to individualistic scholarship. Wang writes perceptively of the faltering efforts made to theorise feminism and Romanticism together. If anything, he underrates the extent to which the heterogeneous concerns of feminist criticism are increasingly supplying the blueprint for a more decentered mapping of the field of Romantic writing, but this does not detract from his cogent analysis of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, from which is unfolded a refreshing theoretical subtlety to match its polemical energy. In his final chapter, Wang tackles Harold Bloom's strong misreading of Emerson as precursor-evangelist of a vatic individual Self that bestrides historical process. An excursion into Emerson's *English Traits* shows how far the latter involves identity in the wider contours of social experience, and thus 'how much Bloom's Emersonian American self is metonymically linked to what it attempts - heroically, fatally - to transcend'. Wang also discusses the visible articulation of a 'romance of self' with contemporary history (such as the Gulf War) in Bloom's recent reincarnation as a 'public intellectual'. *Fantastic Modernity* is patently addressed to a highly-trained audience of graduate initiates, and the style of writing is correspondingly one that takes no prisoners. One accepts, probably, that a discourse on 'postmodern historicism' will be less than relaxing, though one still regrets the extreme academicism, the overworked sentences, and irritating mannerisms like the prolific use of the archaism 'oftentimes'. A disregard of British Romantic studies is even less likely to ingratiate members of BARS: the work of Marilyn Butler, for example, earns only a passing mention - perhaps because her methodology confutes Wang's logic of representative figures? Cavils aside, this is an immensely thoughtful book that casts an admirably sharp light on the transmission and reproduction of Romantic knowledge.

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John Mullan (General Editor), *Lives of the Great Romantics By Their Contemporaries*. 3 vols. London: Picador and Chatto, 1996. Volume 1: Shelley, ed. John Mullan. Pp. xxxii + 419. Volume 2: Byron, ed. Chris Hart. Pp. xxvi + 457. Volume 3: Wordsworth, ed. Peter Schwaab. Pp. xxvii + 497. (Set. 3 vols. £175/\$265. ISBN 1 85196 280 0). One hardly knows what to make of this collection: insufficiently comprehensive for the purposes of scholarly research, and yet rather too expensive - as a three-volume set - for personal reference or private recreation, its function is, to say the least,

ambiguous. However, it does contain a wealth of fascinating primary material, which has been edited and presented with great finesse, and it is in these terms that it should be heartily recommended. But it might still be worth querying the absence, in the introduction to the first volume, of a preliminary discussion briefly explaining the ways in which this project could be seen to relate to current debates on Romanticism, Romantic biography and life-writing, as this might have supplied it with a more coherent rationale. Critical issues aside, however, the ostensible purpose of the set is clear enough. Quite simply, it offers a survey of the extended series of biographical memoirs that were published during the course of the nineteenth century by the friends and contemporaries of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley. Suitably enough, therefore, there is no recourse to unpublished private journals, letters and diaries, nor are there many examples of formal literary criticism; the emphasis throughout is upon those personal reminiscences and eye-witness accounts that were written with an eye to publication. And this is what renders the set so engaging, for not only are we made aware, as we read, of the self-consciously literary nature of many of these memoirs, their rhetorical and formal richness - - which the homogenising tendency of modern literary biography has always tended to efface -- but we are also constantly reminded of the mixed motives of their authors, the dynamic of beatification and betrayal at the heart of Romantic biography. Each volume contains facsimile reproductions, arranged in chronological order, of all of the most celebrated primary sources relating to the particular poet in question, sometimes presenting texts almost in their entirety, sometimes giving only very brief selections. In the Shelley volume especially, all the usual suspects have been rounded up: Thomas Medwin, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Thomas Love Peacock & Edward Trelawny are all represented, and so too is Mary Shelley, although only in two rather small extracts. Similarly, a fair amount of space in the volume on Byron is devoted to those members of the poet's inner circle -- Thomas Moore, John Cam Hobhouse, Robert Dallas, Medwin (again), and Teresa Guiccioli -- who sought most actively to defend and develop the poet's reputation in the years immediately after his death. Only in the volume on Wordsworth, indeed, are there any real surprises, for rubbing shoulders with Crabb Robinson, Hazlitt, De Quincey and Haydon there are a number of valuable testimonies from lesser known figures, some emanating from the Wordsworth circle itself -- Christopher Wordsworth's official biography of 1851, for example, and also Sara Coleridge's *Memoirs* -- others from rather more unexpected sources, such as the biographer Charles Young, who gives a touching account of the ageing Wordsworth and Coleridge on their European tour of 1828, and Thomas Cooper, the 'physical force' Chartist (supposedly the original model for Kingsley's *Alton Locke*) who gives a vivid account of visiting the poet in the late In each volume, and in each extract, the editors invite one to meditate on the personal motives which lay behind each act of commemoration -- the feelings of loyalty, animosity, or plain financial insecurity that forced them into print. But in passage after passage one is also reminded of the wider historical imperative that tended to govern this form of hagiography. During the first half of the nineteenth century, there was, as is well known, a rapid expansion in the field of literary production, and a subsequent fragmentation of the general reading public, which was one of the reasons why the concept of genius began to develop an almost magnetic power over many of the critics

and writers of the day, for it offered a kind of rallying point for those who wished for a new aristocracy of talent to replace the old-style republic of letters. This helps to explain why so many of the extracts reproduced in these volumes are keen to establish the public and private qualities requisite in a man of genius, as well as to ascertain which writers of the period might be seen to possess them. That this obsession with genius was not merely an egotistical concern of the poets themselves, but part of a broader concern with the role of the artist in the age of mass publicity, goes some way towards explaining the considerable contemporary interest in the poets' private lives; it also helps to give added significance to the literary infighting that occasionally broke out between them. Viewed in this light, Wordsworth's repeated attacks on Byron, reports of which punctuate many of the memoirs reprinted here, need not be seen simply as expressions of literary jealousy, ill-considered swipes at the most celebrated poet of the day by one condemned, as Hazlitt put it, to become 'the spoiled child of disappointment'. For they can also be read as part of a self-conscious attempt to persuade the reading public of the fundamentally transcendent nature of genius, seeking to define the true poet as one who pursues not novelty or notoriety -- as the author of *Childe Harold* was deemed to have done -- but those truths which are (paradoxically) at one and the same time both original and universal. Repeatedly Wordsworth strives to identify true genius as that which refuses to submit itself to the whims of contemporary fashion, but addresses itself instead to the tribunal of posterity -- an ostentatiously virtuous rejection of the literary market-place which is also a way of giving his own work a higher profile within it, in that sense an entirely unconscious subjection to the cultural logic of the avant-garde. A similar concern to identify the nature of true genius can be seen to inform Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, which contains one of the most spiteful character assassinations ever to be inflicted upon the memory of a dead poet. In introducing this extract, Chris Hart takes pains to emphasise the unreliability of Hunt's account, highlighting the extent to which its character of Byron was violently skewed by professional animosity, anti-aristocratic prejudice & the need to make money, contrasting it with the series of memoirs produced by the noble lord's more intimate friends and acquaintances -- most notably John Cam Hobhouse -- in which the 'real' Byron is more faithfully represented. But this is surely to neglect the sense in which, for all its faults and inaccuracies, Hunt's text does ultimately offer a very faithful account of the poet's life and works -- faithful, that is, to its own class perspective -- since what he effectively supplies is a 'Cockney' critique of Byron's aristocratic dilettantism that is both coherent and compelling when seen in its own terms. Indeed it is one of the virtues of this set that each volume offers a richly kaleidoscopic treatment of its subject, in which a series of contrasting perspectives are straightforwardly juxtaposed. This means that rather than encouraging a monolithic account of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley -- as many full-blown biographies inevitably tend to do -- it generates a sense of the interpretative parameters within which each life was received and represented, with the result that each character appears in an irreducibly plural, multi-faceted way. This is not to say, however, that certain patterns of interpretation do not reproduce themselves during the course of each volume. Many of these accounts feed upon one another, so that in the latter ones especially there is a bead-roll that they tell over in the course of canonising

their subject. But even this can be interesting, especially when, as with many of the Wordsworth extracts, there is a strong tendency on the part of the memorialist to imitate the forms and tropes of the poet's own work. For example, not only does the third of John Wilson's *Letters from the Lakes* (1818) rehearse many of the religious and political opinions expounded in *The Excursion*, it also reproduces its characteristic narrative structure, the exchanges between the Wilson's semi-fictional narrative persona and the reclusive visionary poet serving to recall and reinforce the dialogic relationship established between Narrator and the Wanderer in Wordsworth's epic poem. At other times, however, this tendency towards pastiche works in a more ambivalent way, as is the case with Thomas Jefferson Hogg's reminiscences of Shelley at Oxford, in which the author quite clearly represents himself as having been a rational, responsible Clerval to Shelley's demented Frankenstein, so that the very form of his celebration of the poet's high-flown genius carries within it a kind of implicit critique. In sum, then, this is a deeply absorbing collection. It affords many of the pleasures and insights of traditional literary biography, but it also encourages one to reflect critically upon the biographical project itself. And precisely because it possesses such a breadth of appeal, it really deserves to be issued in paperback form, where it could be made available to undergraduates wishing to acquaint themselves with the biographical legacy of the 'great romantics' while continuing to function as a ready reference for scholarly research.

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John Mullan (General Editor), *Lives of the Great Romantics II. Keats, Coleridge & Scott by Their Contemporaries*. 3 vols London: Pickering and Chatto, 1997. Volume 1: Keats, ed. Jennifer Wallace. Pp. xxxviii + 319. Volume 2: Coleridge, ed. Ralph Pite. Pp. xxxv + 406. Volume 3: Scott, ed. Fiona Robertson. Pp. xxxiii + 414. (Set. 3 vols. £224/\$330. ISBN 1 85196 373 1. The second collection of biographical accounts of the canonical Romantic writers contains recollections of Keats, Coleridge, and Scott. As one would expect, given the brief of the series, the accounts and extracts are mostly reasonably well-known but they do also contain a few surprise inclusions of unfamiliar material. Annotation is light but helpful and each volume is provided with a good introduction and chronology setting the biographical context and discussing the way the various authors were constructed by their nineteenth-century biographers. The series is ideal for a graduate student new to the Romantics who can easily and accessibly gain a sense of how the critical canon was created in the case of the writer in question. It also serves as a handy reference guide and reminder for the more experienced scholar of Romanticism who is not equally familiar with the lives of the three writers. The index to the three volumes is especially rewarding in this respect, as one can check on those fugitive references to Coleridge's dislike of the French or to his consumption and use of laudanum which escape immediate recollection. Each section or extract is presented in facsimile so the readers gains some impression of the historicity of the account and of the format in which it appeared. This, of course, means some of the accounts are friendlier upon the eye than others: De Quincey's expose of Coleridge's plagiarism in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (1834-35) is particularly difficult and many will prefer to re-visit David Wright's edition of the *Recollections of the*

lakes and the lake Poets (1970). Interestingly the subjects of all three volumes are show how the lives of their subjects were organized with reference to one defining event or narrative pattern: the early death of Keats, Coleridge's apparent wasted promise, and Scott's heroism in the face of financial ruin. Extracts are organised in chronological order (with minor exceptions) so readers obtain a sense of the development of the subjects' literary reputation and standing and a real notion of how the category 'Great Romantic' itself came into being by the end of the nineteenth century and the various interests that constructed it (although this is not an issue which the editors themselves address). So too an informed reader may also appreciate the developments in the arts of nineteenth-century biography Jennifer Wallace's volume on Keats collects the rather fewer accounts of the poet than the other poets in the series and in her judicious introduction explains the reasons for this as originating from the battles surrounding Keats's literary legacy. Wallace argues that all the discussions of Keats's life are based on caricature and/or idealisation of the poet. Wallace is also well aware of Keats's own construction of himself as a canonical poet and his obsession with his 'posthumous existence as a poet'. We are also well aware, following Susan Wolfson's work on the feminisation of Keats, how Leigh Hunt and other nineteenth-century writers presented Keats as the sensitive and aloof poet. Wallace collects some familiar accounts, including those by John Hamilton Reynolds, Thomas Medwin, Richard Monckton Milnes, B. R. Haydon, and Coleridge. Shelley's Adonais is also present because of its influential propagation of the notion that Keats's death was occasioned by a bad review in the Quarterly, although in many ways Shelley's exercise in canon construction tells us more about his own literary ambitions than those of Keats. Ralph Pite's anthology of Coleridge biographies is particularly interesting in showing the multi-faceted appeal of Coleridge to different writers. As Pite's introduction shrewdly points out, Coleridge was 'too ambiguous a figure to become quite so controversial' as Shelley. Pite's collection also includes familiar accounts of Lamb, Hazlitt, LeGrice, De Quincey, Cottle, Gillman, Carlyle and so on but one or two surprises as well. Peacock's caricature of the poet as 'Mr Mystic' from Melincourt (1817) is preferred over Nightmare Abbey's (1818) more sustained caricature of Mr Flosky. The volume does not include Charles Lloyd's malicious eponymous creation from Edmund Oliver (1798) but instead the obscure portrait from Thomas Brown's satirical novel Bath (1818) of which few will be aware. Brown's sketch of 'Mr Crazy' the 'poetical apostate' parodies Coleridge's political career in a cruder and more brutal manner than Peacock. Fiona Robertson's volume on Scott is in many ways the most original collection of accounts, or at least it may seem so to those of its readers who have lost some of the sense of Scott's crucial importance in his own time. Scott and Byron were probably the two most celebrated writers of their day and certainly the most popular: Byron for his verse narratives and Scott for his novels. Scott's status as a 'Great Romantic' however is somewhat problematic. Robertson's task is also different in that she argues that Lockhart's Memoirs (1837-8) became the quintessential nineteenth-century biography, assuming a more important status than any single biography of the poets in the other volumes. As the less familiar life, Robertson's discussion of Scott is particularly helpful in providing an informed commentary on the various accounts. Overall this is a fine scholarly edition of extracts from a series of biographical accounts of

the three Romantic poets. It will serve as a good addition to the stock of academic libraries where the originals are not easily available.

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