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Eric Robinson, David Powell and P.M.S. Dawson (eds.), John Clare, Poems of the Middle Period 1822-1837. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, Volume I: The Shephard's Calendar, Village Stories and Other Poems. Pp. 408. ú60. ISBN 0 19 812340 X. Volume II: Poems in Order of Manuscript. Pp. 420. ú60. 0 19 812387 6. These two volumes, the first of five for the Middle Period, initiate the final phase in the Oxford English Texts edition of John Clare's poetry. Later Poems (2 volumes, 1984) collected all the poetry from the asylum years of 1837-1864; Early Poems (2 volumes, 1989), collected all the poetry in and around Clare's first two publications, Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery (1820) and The Village Minstrel (1821). The editors' explanation of what the present volumes contain is not particularly transparent. The first volume, unmistakably, is Clare's third publication, The Shepherd's Calendar (1827), lovingly restored to its unedited (and much fuller) manuscript state, and reunited with the 'Village Stories' and 'Other Poems' with which it was originally accompanied. The editors have previously published this version of The Shepherd's Calendar in 1964 and 1993, but it is good to have the benefit of their further work on the manuscripts, and to see it alongside the stories and other poems, as Clare had planned it. The second volume under review is described as 'Poems in Order of Manuscript', covering the period 1823-32. Since Clare compiled his own extensive selection from the unpublished poetry of this period, The Midsummer Cushion (to which two of the last three volumes in this edition will be dedicated), it seems that what we actually have here, in essence, is Clare's reject pile for 1823-32, comprising those poems he judged too poor, incomplete, or controversial to be selected for publication, together with numerous scraps and leftovers. Clearly some of the poetry here is poor, and much of it is scrappy: nevertheless it is a rich and valuable collection. It includes important, and in no sense inferior poems, like 'The Mores', 'Birds Nesting', 'The Mole Catcher', and 'A Sunday with Shepherds & Herdboys'. It collects significant folk material like 'The Moris Dance' which is Clare's fragmentary version of the Helpston Mummer's Play, and his renderings of a number of folk songs. These have been printed before, in George Deacon's invaluable John Clare and the Folk Tradition (1983), but that is long out of print. Among the material that has never been published before there are some intriguing experiments, including a scurrilous mini-Dunciad on five rival local would-be poets (the first verse gives the flavour):

In a spot were a bard or a readable book
Is as scarce as good food in famine
Five muck worms their own honest callings forsook
& must needs a new calling be a shamming
Theyd heard of famd parnuss its fountains & daughters

& ryme turnd their brains topsy turvy So they thought if they een got a dip in its waters Twoud cure as the sea cures the scurvy (II, [3]).

As the rough-and-ready quality of this suggests, what we are seeing in this volume is, as it were, Clare's workshop, in which he tries out all sorts of different styles of poetry -- often playfully, as here. He tries his hand at Shakespeare, for instance, in 'Scraps of Tragedy' (the opening verse is a graphic reminder that Macbeth was Clare's favourite Shakespeare play):

The deed is done Hells black intents & purposes are done All seems to favour me--for where was night So black as this--yet hell the first betrays For blackest nights bring in the brightest days --Well may night blacken when the fairest light That ever graced it is put out in night (II, 82).

But most interesting of all, from the point of view of seeing Clare at work, are the very short, typically two-line fragments of poetry which the editors have patiently piled into cairns as they have searched the manuscripts for every last precious scrap. In these couplets, single lines and phrases are glimpsed some of Clare's most memorable images and ideas. For example:

White butter flyes so thick in every lane Shine like to snow flakes dropping in the flowers (II, 293).

On almost the same page we see this again in condensed form, within a longer piece:

& the white Butterflies like flakes of snow (II, 292). The image will recur in the last line of one of the Northborough Sonnets ('& great white butter flye goes dancing by'). As Seamus Heaney has aptly commented on this final version of the image, 'Rarely has the butteriness of the butterfly been so available' (The Redress of Poetry, p. 71). Other fragments have no particular further destination to go to, but do very well just as they are; for instance: The hypocondriac snuffs the morning air & licquorice chews to dissappoint despair (II, 244).

Or: He is all bounce & froth like ginger beer (II, 335).

One's only disappointment here, indeed, is that the editors have not fully indexed all these marvellous scraps and fragments. The creation of this edition of Clare has been an enormous and heroic labour, and generations of readers will be indebted to the editors for their decades of hard work. It seems accordingly churlish to find fault, but at ú60 a volume readers need to know what they can and cannot expect from Middle Poems. They can expect, most importantly, a very high level of accuracy in the transcription of manuscripts. Above all, this edition sets the benchmark in how to untangle and transcribe the enormous mass of Clare's manuscripts. Since copy text is not very well indicated, it should be noted that the first manuscript listed for any text is the one followed. It is not usually explained why a particular copy text is followed, but the variants seem to be noted clearly enough in the textual footnotes so that readers may make their own judgments. The Glossary is outstandingly thorough, and the annotation is useful and enlightening in many areas. The editors have dug deeply into local, historical and folk sources, and

they are usually strong in these areas. They are very weak, however, on literary information. Even the most striking intertextual resemblances are ignored. I have noticed this also in the earlier volumes of the edition, and I think it may reflect the general move towards reading Clare in relation to popular and folk culture. That is obviously a welcome trend, but we should not pretend that Clare is not engaged with polite culture just as deeply. Where he dreams up a 'sleepy fat doxy calld dulness' (II, 4), I would have thought that some reference to Pope would be obligatory in the apparatus, and one could multiply such examples. Since the editing team includes a Shelley scholar, I am rather surprised that a line such as 'Rouse but the lion from its slumber' (II, 231) remains unannotated, not least because if this is indeed an echo of 'The Masque of Anarchy', it would enable a far more accurate dating of Clare's poem than is currently offered. The general Introduction to these volumes is also disappointing, full of critical banalities, and busy shadow-boxing with views on Clare no-one has seriously held for many a long year. We are darkly warned of an orthodoxy 'prevailing in some circles to this day' that poetry 'could only be written by university graduates steeped in Latin and Greek mythology' (I, xxi). I have never come across such an orthodoxy, even among the most zealous classicists. Certainly Clare's position remains insecure in some ways, and there are still critics and anthologists sufficiently short-sighted or thick-skinned to ignore his claims. But the age of paranoia should surely by now be over in Clare Studies. One has rather more sympathy with the editors' 'great sense of relief, as well as accomplishment' (I, [ix]) as their long task draws to its end (the last volumes will appear within the next year or two). Editing is a thankless task whose results swiftly become obsolete. Already, a movement towards a more editorially determined presentation of Clare has begun to gain momentum. Zachary Leader's new study of Romantic authorship [reviewed above] outlines the issues involved carefully and thoroughly. Recent editions of Clare, such as those of Geoffrey Summerfield, and Kelsey Thornton, have re-introduced some editorial punctuation. No doubt Clare editing will continue to develop and mutate, and a range of possible ways of presenting his work will be explored and offered to (what one hopes will be) an ever-increasing readership. All such moves will only be possible, however, because of the tremendous work Eric Robinson and his collaborators have put into the decoding and printing of Clare's poetry manuscripts. In order to determine how to edit him for changing readerships, we first need to consult the orthographically stark, doggedly faithful transcriptions of the manuscripts offered here. Whatever shortcomings they may have as a reading edition, these solid, well-produced volumes will undoubtedly stand as the basic point of reference for Clare's readers and admirers for many years to come.

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Warren Stevenson, *Romanticism and the Androgynous Sublime*. London: Farleigh Dickinson University Press (Associated University Presses), 1996. Pp. 153. ú23. ISBN 0 8386 3668 3. This is a touchingly earnest book. Stevenson is fired by a belief in the transformative powers of androgynous art, a form of sublime expression which especially characterises the work of the six 'great' Romantic poets. The book's tone is also wistful. The author is uneasy in what he describes as 'theme deciduous and neotheoretical days' (p.9)

and longs for the time when we knew what art was for and who produced it. Indeed this appeal is so passionately made that even the most sceptical may be persuaded (at least initially) to read the book on its own terms. If one does, there is much of interest. In six brief chapters Stevenson describes the form of androgynous art achieved, always through struggle, by each writer: Blake is paired with 'divine androgyny', Wordsworth the 'patriarchal sublime', Coleridge's Journey 'from the analogical to the androgynous sublime' comes next, then Byron's 'sublime androgyny', Shelley's 'androgynous quest', with the final-rousing- chapter celebrating the 'immortal androgyny' of John Keats. As these terms suggest Stevenson's writing is somewhat schematic but the broad brush strokes of his argument work fairly well. More interesting, though, are the issues he raises 'by the way'. For example, his insights into Blake's liberal treatment of homoeroticism and lesbianism in Jerusalem deserve much praise. Few have given such a suggestive interpretation of the masculine emanation Shiloh, nor commented with Stevenson's enthusiasm on the confusing erotics of Plate 28. His ambitious reading of Christabel for androgynous motifs is also noteworthy, as is the spirited attempt to revalue Shelley's often neglected 'The Witch of Atlas'. There is no need to agree with Stevenson's conclusions to see that the androgynous lens is capable of producing some highly original perceptions. There are, however, a number of problems. On a practical level the book is simply too short. Assertions often remain just that, unsupported by evidence. There is also an anecdotal use of biography which, frankly, made me wince (can a screeching voice really have increased Shelley's androgynous credentials?!). More seriously, and inevitably I suppose, Stevenson fails to engage with any of the theoretical debates which his choice of subject demands. A brisk overview of critical writing on the sublime is included but no attention is given to the political and sexual issues raised (in our 'neotheoretical days') by the perplexing concept of androgyny . As a result the term comes to signify everything, yet, nothing. For if 'all art is androgynous, aspiring to sublimity'(p.132) what makes the Romantics worth our study? There is also the problem of unexamined sexual stereotypes and the invocation of such dubious entities as the 'eternal feminine principle' (p.88). Fundamentally, what this book lacks is a clear understanding of gender and identity (especially poetic identity) in the Romantic period. And because Stevenson does not have a firm grasp on the notions of sexual difference operative at this historical moment he is unable to comment convincingly on those writers who may have synthesized or transcended those notions. I must also add that this task is made considerably more difficult because the author elects to exclude female writers from his study. We are told this decision was made 'primarily for historical reasons'(p.13). A reading of Romanticism and the Androgynous Sublime, and a sense of the emotion behind it, suggest that this may not be the whole story.

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Nancy Easterlin, *Wordsworth and the Question of "Romantic Religion"*. London: Associated University Presses, 1996. Pp. 182 ú25. ISBN 0 8487 5309 4. In his Essay, Supplementary to the Preface to "The "Lyrical Ballads" (1815), William Wordsworth notes the affinity between religion and poetry, marking both their community of nature and the tension between them. Harking back critically to the tradition of Samuel Johnson of *The Lives of the*

Poets, Wordsworth recognizes the dangers of the 'pious and devout' in poetry and that overreaching which inevitably results in error. He also discusses in some detail the nature of religious faith and Christianity as the 'religion of humility'. Wordsworth, of course, did not have the benefit of a post-Freudian understanding of the psychology of religion, and, if Nancy Easterlin is anything to go by, that is just as well. For, working from such a perspective, she finds that Romanticism suffers from a vague and imprecise understanding of the word religion, and, from our apparently happier and better-informed position, we may clarify what to Wordsworth was so unclear, and come up with something which he would have felt to be so obvious as to merit no comment at all. It is not that Easterlin's analysis of religious feeling and belief in Wordsworth's poetry is without interest, but this book stands as a warning to all concerned with interdisciplinary studies not to impose a later and finally alien framework upon a body of poetry such that the poetry itself loses any voice and finally remains unread. The Wordsworth of 'Tintern Abbey', *The Prelude* and even *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets* is much more interesting and much more subtly self-aware than these psychoanalytic assaults upon them would suggest. It has certainly always been the case that the notion of religion only really becomes interesting when orthodoxy and the institutions which claim to guard it become unstable and uncertain. Religion then becomes both fascinating and difficult for the individual and rarely more so than in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. As the poet himself acknowledges, exceptional sensibility and a sustained capacity for recollection are the chief attributes of his art, and in 'Tintern Abbey' these do not result in a division between his mystical experiences of nature at a certain time and in a certain place and Christian orthodoxy, but rather a remarkable merging of them in a language which draws deeply upon the vocabulary of the religious tradition. As J. R. Watson pointed out in a book which would have well informed Easterlin's work (and is missing from her bibliography), Wordsworth's *Vital Soul* (1982), 'Tintern Abbey' crucially combines the simultaneous existence of two states -- the solitary and the universal -- both of them pervading its language in a tragic but necessary tension. It was probably inevitable that Wordsworth should decline into the 'recompense in institutions' found in *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets* even while he still looked back in 1848 (as recorded by the Duke of Argyll) with such enthusiasm to the earlier and greater poem. Easterlin's recording of Wordsworth's poetic decline into Anglicanism is too simple because based not upon a response to his language, but upon too stark a division between his youthful sense of the integrity of private experience and his later move towards the unconvincing impersonalities of the Church of England. Time and again she reads into the poems from her perspective of the psychology and sociology of religion rather than drawing from a close reading of the poetry, so that the words become not the poet's own but the vocabulary of a later interpretation of transcendent experience and religion. The result is a conclusion which trivializes not only Wordsworth but art itself inasmuch as (in Easterlin's own words) 'we ask too much of it, wanting simultaneously a reflection of reality and some transcendent consolation, in spite of our awareness that the two represent incompatible epistemologies' (p.151). This is a book which suffers from being too close to the thesis, and contains frequent lapses of grammar. It illustrates the dangers of interdisciplinary study when it tries to impose on literature categories which finally prevent us from reading

and recognizing the particular and subtle voice of the poetry itself as it becomes encased in the straightjacket of other paradigms which claim to know more and define more clearly than the art on which they feed.

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Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Pp. 354 pages. ISBN 0 19 812264 0. In line with Zachary Leader's previous books, *Reading Blake's Songs* (1981) and *Writer's Block* (1990), this latest work sets out to question the relationship between Romantic self-hood and textual revision. In many respects, the book itself may be read as an act of critical revision, for running through these essays is a determination to challenge consensus at every level. Following the example of Jerome McGann, Leader sets out to expose the 'uncritical absorption in Romanticism's self-representations' wherever it may appear. And it appears, it must be said, in some fairly unexpected places: in the work of Marxist critics attempting to 'rescue' an authentic Clare from the hands of profiteering editors; in feminist efforts to disclose the 'original' voice of Mary Shelley, untainted by the interventions of the revisionary Percy Shelley; in post-structuralist assertions of the 'essential' multiplicity of Byron. By focusing on dry-as-dust issue of textual revision Leader argues that contemporary criticism is in thrall to the ideology of romantic autonomy and, in particular, its dependence on the 'ideal text'. It should come as no surprise therefore that Wordsworth is the subject of the opening chapter in this book. The controversial decision on the part of the Cornell editors to re-print (for which read reconstruct) the earliest available text is singled out for characteristic censure. In light of the wealth of critical debate generated by the series the topic may seem somewhat hackneyed, but the virtue of Leader's approach is that it combines a broad, contextualizing argument with close analysis. Thus we learn that the evaluative distinction between early and late Wordsworth is misconceived on the grounds that it denies the poet's conception of an underlying 'continuity' of self. Readers used to the idea of a thoroughly deconstructed Wordsworth will find this notion surprising, not to say alarming. Wordsworth, we are told, revised his poems not to 'alter' or 'overturn' but to clarify or refine 'an original and still-living intention'. The conclusion, that we should respect an author's final instructions in the same way that we respect the will of the deceased is, to say the least, confusing. The point seems to be that when measured against the 'relative claims' of truth, beauty and history, the responsibility of editors should rest with the legally sanctioned claims of the author (and Wordsworth, as Leader notes, was among the first to insist on this right). Does this mean that responsible editors should re-print only the 1850 version of the Prelude? There is a serious pedagogic point to be made here. For one thing, I am not at all sure that students would be able to perceive a 'still-living intention' in this poem as it seems to me -- philosophical quibbles aside -- that there are significant aesthetic and political differences between the early and later texts. To suggest that MS E (the last version overseen by Wordsworth) is a clarification or refinement of the poet's essential self is, I think, somewhat misleading. This is not to undervalue 'secondary processes' (the Prelude, in whatever form, is always already a thoroughly revised poem; MS A just happens to be a convenient stop-off) nor is it to uncritically assume a 'thoroughly Romantic' view of the distinction between early and late, or

radical and conservative, it is rather to express a preference for one version of the poet over another. Perhaps, in the end, this is precisely what Leader wants to see: a refusal on the part of editors to conflate the prescriptive language of aesthetics (what is preferred; what readers ought to like) with the descriptive language of truth (what is the case). The teasing conclusion of the Wordsworth chapter aside, the great virtue of Leader's study is that it offers a full and informed perspective on the current state of textual criticism. For once this is a book that benefits from generous footnoting, clearly laid out at the bottom of the page. The on-going dialogue with editors, philosophers and critics is especially useful when following the argument of the chapter on Byron. It is always refreshing to encounter a thought process that revises itself, as it were, in the middle of its journey. Here, the proposition that Byron's 'sense of self was if anything more rigid than Wordsworth's' comes at the end of a lengthy discussion in which the author seemed to be arguing precisely the opposite. That said, the book offers few such surprises. Once we have got used to the idea that Leader is turning the tables on fashionable critical views the chapters take on an air of predictability. This is due, in part, to the dialectical structure of the argument. Little is to be gained from learning, for example, that Coleridge offers a synthesis of the clash between Wordsworth and Byron, or that Keats's revisions are the product of the inter-play between internal and external forces. The book concludes with this statement and it seems a curiously 'flat' note on which to end. Perhaps the return to dialectics does offer a timely correction of the sins of the theorists, but I for one would prefer to see a little less resolution and a little more struggle. Certainly, it is the latter sense that emerges in Leader's best criticism.

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Philip Cox, Gender, Genre and the Romantic Poets: An Introduction, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 199. Pp. 170. Hb ú35. Pb ú12.99. ISBN 0 7190 4263 1; 0 7190 4264 X. Philip Cox's book aims to redress the relative lack of critical attention paid to the imbrication of poetic genres and discourses of gender difference in the Romantic period. Focussing on texts by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron and Shelley, Cox traces the shifting performances of gender in the genres of the sonnet, pastoral, ode, epic and verse drama. If he avoids the potentially essentialist bifurcation of gender and genre (masculine/feminine: poetry/novels) that has haunted some Romantic criticism, and significantly defamiliarises the traditional poetic terrain, the parameters of the old romantic canon nevertheless remain in place, as the list of authors indicates (only Anna Barbauld disturbs the hegemonic pattern). The first chapter concerns the pastoral, and deals with two short poems, Coleridge's 'Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement' and Barbauld's 'To Mr. C---GE', in relation to the genre in question and to each other. He shows how a discourse of economic transaction in the first poem encodes an oscillation between the poles of masculine and feminine; the feminine is both colonised and yet resistant to appropriation (this doubleness is encapsulated in Coleridge's reference to the tears of John Howard, [pp. 31-2]). The second poem reveals that Barbauld is excluded, on the grounds of gendered propriety, from the active sensibility that redeems Coleridge's poetic project, and has recourse instead to a maternal, ultimately subservient, subject position. In many ways this is the most satisfying chapter: the dialogic model

is illuminating, as is the use of Cixous's theory of the gendered economies of giving. There are two chapters on Wordsworth: the first examines the gender implications of Wordsworth's use of the sonnet form (the domain of the sonnet is seen as domestic, private, feminised), and then shows how the 'miscegenated' (p. 55) discourse of 'Tintern Abbey' (sonnet and ode) enacts both the instabilities of the masculine subject and of the romantic imagination. The chapter on *The Prelude* uses Kristeva on narcissism to re-inflect Bloom's anxious theories of Oedipal conflict and to locate an alternative 'feminine' version of the poet's relation to nature and to his predecessors: here the theory is potentially alienating in a book that presents itself as 'An Introduction' and rather submerges the boy of Winander (the subject of the chapter). It may be that *The Prelude* is not recuperable for feminism, as is suggested by Cox's own tentative use of modals at the end of this chapter. The first half of the book takes as its guiding metaphor the performative nature of gender and genre; the second half concentrates more literally on the theatrical, reading *Otho the Great*, *Manfred* and *Prometheus Unbound*, and, following Julie Carlson, Cox confirms the importance of the Romantic drama to an understanding of the period's gender relations. Keats's much-vaunted poetic 'effeminacy' is recognized as a troubled masculinity: for both Ludolph and the poet, the self-affirmation of masculinity is belied by the notion of performance, which must be validated by others. The two chapters on 'closet' drama analyse the binary opposition of mind and body at the heart of this genre, and show how Byron's 'dramatic poem' and Shelley's 'lyrical drama' negotiate between the disembodied act of reading and the materiality of performance. Cox provides a useful survey of romantic commentary on the theatre, especially from Hazlitt: the theatre was seen a risky 'feminine' space where discourses of the body and of commodification threaten the male Romantic writer. In limiting the site of reception, the closet drama tries to control the instabilities of performance, and the two texts are convincingly located within this context of contemporary debate (*Manfred's* yearning for 'bodiless enjoyment' thus 'corresponds significantly with the "bodiless" reading of a dramatic text advocated by Lamb and others' [p.115]). Cox might also have considered the actual conditions of theatrical production during the early nineteenth century, which relate significantly to the public/private dilemmas of closet drama (that is, the theatre fails to accommodate these plays in technological and ideological terms). Moreover, of all the closet dramas Cox might have chosen to consider, Byron's *Manfred* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* barely gesture towards represented bodily action, and thus are less fissured by the problematics of the body and the public than some other plays. There is no reference to Alan Richardson's *A Mental Theatre* which demonstrates how a concern with the social is a theme of much closet drama, nor to Joanna Baillie's alternative definition of the genre as dramatizing scenes from a character's closet rather than referring to an unperformed or unperformable text. Much remains to be said about the epistemology (and sexuality) of closet drama to which Baillie's texts and dramatic theory are central (as in the recent work of Catherine Burroughs). Personal predilections for Joanna Baillie aside, Cox's book makes an important contribution to the current re-thinking of Romanticism, and will stimulate further work on generic hybridity and Romantic poetry.

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Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley, eds. Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices. University Press of New England, 1995. Pp. 326 Pb. \$12.99. ISBN 0 87451 724 9. Andrew Ashfield, ed. Romantic Women Poets, 1770-1838: An Anthology. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1995. Pp. 327. Pb \$12.99 ISBN 0 7190 3789

1. In *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, Feldman and Kelley have collected essays on the mostly marginalized women writers of the Romantic Period. This collection shows how these writers were culturally significant in their own day, and how learning about their various writings gives us a fuller picture of the Romantic Period. One of the main questions addressed directly by Feldman and Kelley, and indirectly by the various essayists in this volume, is whether to explore the works of these women writers solely in the cultural context of women's writing without reference to their male contemporaries, or whether to compare women's writing with men's writing of the same genre and period. Feldman and Kelley argue that their contributors 'present both sides of this debate. Some argue that writing by Romantic women should be read on its own terms and situated in its own contexts, so that its assessment will not be contaminated by critical predispositions that are derived from the study of the traditional Romantic canon. Others contend rather that the voices of women Romantics gain their fullest resonance when read within and against that traditional canon'. Feldman and Kelley have organized their contributors' essays into four sections, the first one of which is concerned with 're-imagining' more than one 'Romantic canon'. Thus, in the first essay in this volume, Isobel Armstrong suggests that we leave the question of the place of women Romantic poets in relation to men poets of that period until 'women's work is known better' through collections such as this one. Then Armstrong gives detailed exegeses of a range of women's poems from a socio-cultural explication of Anna Barbauld's "Inscription for an IceHouse" to a psychoanalytic interpretation of Felicia Hemans' 'Casabianca'. Also in this section, Susan Wolfson analyses masculine and feminine concepts of the soul in relation to both men and women's writing, through which she implicitly compares the work of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats with that of Maria Jane Jewsbury and Felicia Hemans. Stephen Behrendt, in giving a cultural and biographical context to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, takes the line that 'Frankenstein's Creature shares the situation of Romantic women, marginalized and spurned by a society to whose patriarchal schemata they fail to conform'. And, to conclude Part One, Mitzi Myers presents Maria Edgeworth's autobiographical story, 'The Bracelets', as 'an exemplary feminine fable of identity formation and emergent authorship'. The second section comprises accounts of ways in which women poets have tried, in the Romantic Period, to overcome obstacles to their becoming authors and publishing their work. William McCarthy thus asserts that that Anna Barbauld's poems are 'feminist fantasies of compensation' which have resulted from her living in a 'culture that constructed "woman" as a stunted, mutilated being'. Anthony John Harding tries to give a 'more positive feminist interpretation' of Felicia Hemans' poetry by 'emphasizing her resistance to patriarchal notions of identity and her affirmation of women's own sense of themselves', but he does not demonstrate convincingly that Hemans produced 'sometimes brilliant lyric and narrative art'. Judith Pike concludes this section

with a discussion of fetishism in relation to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights*. Essays in the third section are mainly concerned with gender in relation to nationalism, including Jeanne Moskal's account of the Irish Sydney Owenson's travel-writing, Richard C. Sha's historical analysis of the prose sketches of Sydney Owenson and Helen Maria Williams in relation to their feminine sensibilities, and Moira Ferguson's discussion of the Scottish labouring poet Janet Little's lyric responses to some of the poems of her compatriot, Robert Burns. Feldman and Kelley's concluding section gives accounts of the relationship between 'performance' of works by women Romantic writers and the 'marketplace'. Catherine B. Burroughs attempts to rehabilitate Joanna Baillie's blank verse drama *De Monfort* as a play that might be performed theatrically, rather than being treated merely as 'literary'. Susan Levin gives an interesting account of the marketing of the talents of the then popular singer/songwriter Harriett Abrams. The final essay, Judith Pascoe's 'Mary Robinson and the Literary Marketplace', is a model of historico-literary criticism in that she throws light on Robinson's financial need to market her work, especially to the *Morning Post*. She compares Robinson's contributions under her own name and pseudonyms with the contributions of poets such as S. T. Coleridge and Robert Southey: 'Robinson was enmeshed in the fabric of the newspaper in a way that even Southey, who preceded her as poetry editor, was not; her bold-print last name stood out from the page in numerous contexts. As well as being responsible for the contents of the columns devoted to ORIGINAL POETRY, as the *Post* heralded its literary selections, she was also the subject of frequent flattering comments and news briefs'. This kind of contextualizing of women's poetry gives their work interest and resonance. This brings us to the controversial question: which women authors and which of their works might usefully be reprinted from the Romantic Period for present-day readers? In relation to women's poetry of the period, Andrew Ashfield attempts a response to this question with his *Romantic Women Poets, 1770-1838: An Anthology*. His choice of poems is determined by his editorial policy of mainly including poems which are on traditionally 'Romantic' themes. Thus his volume contains some verse of indifferent aesthetic quality, since many of the women poets of the Romantic Period who wrote verse on conventional 'Romantic' themes tended to be derivative. Mary Hays, for example, in 'An Invocation to the Nightingale, Written Near the New Forest in Hampshire', self-deprecatingly apostrophizes the 'little songstress' and 'lovely mourner' as the bearer of a 'tuneful lay'. The nightingale is one of the most hackneyed subjects of poetry of the Romantic Period, and such rediscovered poems on this theme seem insignificant when compared to John Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale'. In his 'Introduction', Ashfield describes his aim, 'At the expense of some variety, I have tried to demonstrate the remarkable coherence of women's concerns and to show that these concerns confront very fully central developments in eighteenth-century moral and aesthetic theory'. An anthologist who attempts to demonstrate a 'coherence of women's concerns' in a selection of poetry seems a little self-limiting particularly when such an editorial policy leads, for example, to the inclusion of Joanna Baillie's relatively weak 'London' and to the exclusion of original satiric narrative 'A Disappointment'. Baillie's 'London', though its theme is the 'sublime', cannot compare with William Wordsworth's 'On Westminster Bridge', whereas 'A Disappointment' is as

original a satire as poems that Robert Burns or William Wordsworth attempted in that sub-genre. Nevertheless, by reprinting sonnets by Anna Seward, Charlotte Smith, and Helen Maria Williams, Ashfield demonstrates his point that 'the sonnet form' was 'largely rehabilitated' by these three women. By extending the Romantic Period forward to 1838, Ashfield is able to accommodate, from the latter years, the excellent poets Emily and Charlotte Brontë, Caroline Norton, and Elizabeth Barrett. Some chronologically-minded critics, however, would place these four women poets in the post-Romantic Victorian Period. Ashfield's notes on poems vary from full (for example, on Anna Seward's 'Sonnet: To the Poppy') to non-existent (for example, he give no note except the source for Joanna Baillie's 'London'). Nevertheless, his 'Selected Thematic Index', which categorizes the poems in his anthology according to selected themes, is very useful to those of us who want to teach Romantic women's poetry thematically.

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Jennifer Breen, ed. *Women Romantics 1785 - 1832: Writing in Prose*. London: Everyman, 1996. Pp. xi + 291. Pb. £5.99. ISBN 0 460 87793 3.

Jennifer Breen makes clear in her introduction to *Women Romantics 1785-1832: Writing in Prose*, that the definition of 'Romanticism' informing the selection of writers in the anthology is one anchored in a sense of historical location rather than shared generic conventions. Therefore, although the texts included are limited to works of non-fiction, the extent of the contribution by women to both the public and private literary spheres is reflected in the inclusion of a variety of literary genres. Alongside private letters, journals and diaries, Breen has included political tracts, philosophical works and articles which address a wide range of subjects. This enables, and encourages, the reader to examine the manner in which specific forms, in particular the letter, were appropriated by women in order to enter into contemporary debates. Breen's editorial strategy is interesting in that, while her introduction is effective in suggesting thematic and intertextual links, she has refrained from grouping the extracts under umbrella headings. Therefore, while the reader is provided with a framework within which to position the individual texts in recognised relationships to others in the collection, the juxtaposition of disparate genres and subjects allows for alternative readings which build upon either less overt similarities, or a sense of diversity. The frequency with which certain themes, such as education and female social status and rights, recur underlines the way in which women were actively involved in questioning the prevailing ideas of what constituted the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century feminine ideal. These women shared in a culturally and historically specific fascination with the concept of knowledge, but, alongside the abstract questions, their writing indicates concern as to the practical barriers which barred female access to education and information. In the introduction Breen states that her main purpose in compiling this collection of writings is to provide access to 'interesting works that are difficult to obtain'. One of these works is Catherine Macaulay's *Letters on Education*, which provides an excellent example of the way in which women confronted the concept of knowledge on two fronts: the practical and the abstract. Macaulay's text utilises the epistolary form in order to create a dialogue between two women that covers a variety of educational topics, ranging from advice on

primary child care to discussions about the effect of education in society. Not only does Macaulay provide an expansive description of an educational syllabus in which 'the same rules of education in all respects are to be observed to the female as well as to the male children', she also interrogates the idea of sexual difference, the concept of Virtue and the double standard that prevailed in relation to male and female chastity. The extracts in this collection include Macaulay's syllabus for twelve to sixteen year olds, (I think most twentieth-century adults would struggle a little with this), and an attack on Rousseau's theory of sexual difference, which she declares had 'lowered the man of genius to the licentious pedant'. 'Letter 22' also includes her deliberate inversion of Pope's definition of the perfect woman as 'but a softer man'; woman becomes the pivotal norm in the definition, and the perfect man is nothing more than 'a woman formed after a coarser mould'. In disturbing an accepted hierarchy she might be seen to be merely reinforcing an idea of innate difference, but what her inverted polarity makes clear is the power relation involved in determining a gendered identity. Although the thrust of her argument is that the prevailing education system was proving detrimental to both sexes, she argues that it is women who suffered the worst constraints. Her belief that the 'situation and education of women . . . is precisely that which must necessarily tend to corrupt and debilitate both the powers of mind and body', is a sentiment that echoes throughout the extracts from the other women in the anthology. What becomes apparent is that, not only were they articulating a particular feminine perspective, they were also involved in a process of self-inscription within their texts that exemplified their desire to extend the possible subject positions available to women. Works by seventeen different authors, ranging from well-known pieces by Mary Wollstonecraft, to the less familiar but delightful comic letters of Jane Taylor, are represented in the collection. But a sense of the diversity of non-fictional prose written by women of this period is most apparent in the fact that the individual authors are represented through a variety of their own writing. In this way not only can the reader enjoy a sense of intertextual dialogue between the different women, but there is also an interesting interplay between the disparate subject positions adopted by an individual writer. For instance, the self inscription of Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, is set in conversation with the Mary who writes so despairingly to Gilbert Imlay in her private letters. Overall Jennifer Breen's anthology provides an interesting introduction to a variety of texts produced by women between 1785- 1832, and, coupled with the suggestions for further reading and inclusion of critical reaction to such writers will prove a useful reader for all students interested in this period.

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Vincent Newey and Philip Shaw, eds. *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives. Studies in Nineteenth-Century Autobiography* (Series: *The Nineteenth Century*. Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996). Pp. 259. ú40. ISBN 1 85928 206 7. The editors seem to promise weighty textual metaphysics when they speak of the 'transcendent "I"' which 'exists, to the extent that it does exist, only in the act of narration'. But the contributors mostly take the subject in a less awesome spirit, and describe instead more contingent, deliberate acts of self-portrayal - 'self construction' in the sense of 'image management'. The

manipulation covers such a range. Nicholas Everett describes Whitman's trimming of his past to fit his prophetic vocation; Rosemarie Morgan follows Mary Chesnut from her diaries to her written-up account of the civil war; Diana Barsham writes, with flair and comedy, about the 'identity-joke' of Conan Doyle's memoirs. The joke is partly an embarrassment about self-disclosure, something Julian North discovers in De Quincey's *Confessions* too, describing in a well-turned essay the mixture of self-promotion and self-pleading which hostile reviewers seized upon. Carlyle's *Reminiscences* also presented the critics with a work vulnerably at odds with itself, cringingly private yet intensely rhetorical. This might only suggest that Carlyle was as tiresomely rhetorical in private as he was in public; more cleverly, using Bakhtinian tools, David Amigoni's elegant piece traces the ambiguity back to the conditions of composition. Gendered selves occupy other essays. Peter Swaab writes about Wollstonecraft's 'self-fashioning' (the book's key phrase, I suppose) in the *Letters in Sweden*, which he generously interprets as a deliberate mingling of discourses, a refusal to admit exclusive divisions, like reason versus emotion. Nicholas Roe adeptly describes Leigh Hunt's assumption of a 'feminine' stereotype in his *Autobiographies*, a way of kicking against the unimaginative pricks which he learns from Keats. Joanne Shattock writes very illuminatingly about the anti-feminist response of Oliphant and Linton to Cross's life of George Eliot; and Valerie Sanders about the ways in which Yonge, Linton and Ward cast themselves as part of a specifically male tradition. Vincent Newey's essay on Rutherford draws a parallel with Bunyan, with the twist that culmination for Rutherford is not heaven but what Newey calls 'a telos of mutuality', an ideal acted out in a paradoxical and neo-Lawrentian manner in the novel *Catharine Furze*. This is a sensitive and persuasive account, and the abrupt shift in the last pages, in which Catharine is reconfigured as 'less a character than a tissue of signs', comes as rather a jolt. 'She' is a tissue of signs, not just in the way that the *Fighting Temeraire* is a patch of paint, but in the way that she allegorises a fraught contradiction in the spiritual life of the age; but Newey's adroitness throughout has been his alertness to Rutherford's imagining of an individual in conflict: suddenly to abandon subjectivity for sign forsakes that form of attention, I cannot see for what gain. Keith Hanley's Wordsworthian essay is based on an opposition between 'Rome' (religious nationalism and Christian imperialism) and 'Paris' (for Wordsworth, the Revolutionary 'shock' which re-awakens the 'shock of literalism'). The 'discourse of reaction' provoked by 'Paris' makes 'a pre-established discourse suddenly re-empowered': 'Rome' overwrites 'Paris'; but the discourse of 'Rome' won't come alive, and so *The Recluse* never gets written. Nor does *Casaubon's Key*; but *Middlemarch* does, because Eliot alone can re-empower the discourse, as her 'humanistic religion'. Hanley is hardly saying anything as obvious (and wrong) as that Wordsworth was a crypto-Catholic: the essay is pitched on quite an abstract level, so that you feel somehow flat-footed before it. Gathering your nerves in a quiet place, you wonder how much 'Christian imperialism' *The Recluse* was really meant to have, or how appropriate 'Rome' is as a label for Wordsworth's imagination, or whether *Casaubon's* failure is actually comparable to Wordsworth's; but when you return to the essay, it rather laughs you to scorn for such queries, as though you are speaking a dead language. Philip Davis and William Myers contribute quite general essays, both interesting. Davis's is about the curious

double-life of memories, at once past and yet present, which the 'sheer narrative progression' of standard Victorian memoir can hardly evoke. The hectic syntactic life of Dickens can embody the wayward 'microreality' of human temporality; but the Benthamite conditions of Victorian England are unpropitious: appropriately, the exemplary, admirable dullness of Mill's Autobiography only flashes into something vivid at moments of crisis. Newman exemplifies the point too, his Sermons enacting the lived reality of remembering, in contrast to the beaten rectitude of the Apologia. Newman features in Myers's essay in more surprising form still, as a proto-Derrida -- though with the staunchly pre-deconstructive caveat that if we restrict postmodernism to language it is merely game, and only becomes 'serious in the arena of the real', 'reality' being the dark place of fallen selves we find in Newman's theology. Well, here is the self in spades: we should call it the soul.

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Morton D. Paley, Coleridge's Later Poetry. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Pp. 147. ú25. ISBN 0 19 818372 0. Thomas McFarland, Paradoxes of Freedom: The Romantic Mystique of a Transcendence. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. Pp. 139. ú25. ISBN 0 19 812181 4. Morton D. Paley's Coleridge's Later Poetry is unusual among studies of Coleridge not only in resisting the temptation to interpret his poetry primarily in terms of its relationship to his philosophical writings, but also in allowing the qualities of his later verse to emerge as distinctive additions to and transformations of those for which his earlier poems are well-known. As Paley demonstrates, the popular image of Coleridge after 1802 as a 'burnt-out case wandering in a wilderness of abstraction' (p. 3) is largely of Coleridge's own creation; yet not only 'Dejection', but also later poems describing experiences of negation and despair reveal the continuing presence of the imaginative powers they claim are absent. Though aiming to show that these and other later poems are 'worthy of serious attention', however, Paley is unambiguous in describing them as essentially 'minor' poetry -- a term by which he indicates that rather than making the 'prophetic' claims of Coleridge's greatest early poems, they establish a new role for their author 'as a poet of personal sentiment, intimate friendship, and meditative reflection' (p. 25). Consistently taking the details of theme, form, and language in individual poems as his starting-points, Paley constructs a persuasive portrait of an author whose meditations on hope, love, despair, age, and the prospect of death repeatedly return to 'his only true subject: the abyss within himself' (p. 36). Paley's grouping of the poems is both thematic and chronological, reflecting the thematic development of Coleridge's writing. As he shows, the poems of 1806-7 are distinguished by a repeated 'allegorization of Hope' (both personal and political), and of the despair which is its 'ghost' (pp. 33-6). In 1811 -- the year of 'Limbo' and 'Ne Plus Ultra' -- Coleridge's emphasis on negation becomes almost 'apocalyptic', involving a 'negative sublime' and a preoccupation with hell and purgatory arising from a 'personal sense of devastation' following his break with the Wordsworths (pp. 56, 61). The Highgate period after 1816 is more diverse in its concerns, which include the aging-process, the necessity of hope to productive effort, a characteristic opposition to materialism and identification with intellectual minorities who oppose it, and 'the absence of love and the coping strategies that make that absence bearable' (p. 90). As this summary

suggests, Coleridge's later poetry is thus shown to be 'distinctively "later"' (p. 25) not only in its retreat from the more ambitious metaphysical claims of his early poems, but also in its repeated evocations of misery, regret, exclusion, and near-despair. The concluding discussion of Coleridge's 'Epitaph' interestingly connects the use of parts of his name to symbolize the 'drama of suffering, death, and resurrection' in his own life with the repeated 'featuring of personifications in a miniature allegory' which Paley describes as the most distinctive stylistic feature of Coleridge's later poetry, and whose contrast with the symbolism of his earlier poems parallels his movement from grand metaphysical themes to largely personal ones (pp. 29, 131). The dominant function of the later poems is thus revealed with impressive clarity to consist of the 'transfiguring of weakness into strength' which Geoffrey Hill finds in Coleridge's 'To William Wordsworth' (p. 36). This is the source of its repeated paradoxical evocations of negation, privation, and the inadequacy of imagination in poems of outstanding musical and imaginative power.

Coleridge's Later Poetry thus makes an important addition to our understanding of Coleridge's psychological and stylistic development. Its greatest strength is a consistently incisive focus on the details of form and style, through which it enables the complex functions of the poems to emerge unencumbered by presuppositions about their importance or significance. In avoiding any extensive comparison of these poems with the prose writings with which they are contemporary, however, Paley presents to us a Coleridge more consistently preoccupied with misery and disappointment than his later work as a whole reveals, and lays the ground for future analyses of relationships between these two contrasting aspects of Coleridge's later writing.

Thomas McFarland's *Paradoxes of Freedom: The Romantic Mystique of a Transcendence* compares the Romantics' theories and celebrations of autonomy and liberation with those in literature and thought of other periods, showing how the perennial attempt to reconcile individual freedom both with practical or political constraints and with scientific determinism reveals a need for transcendence recurring throughout human history, and which is rendered especially intense by the late twentieth-century experience of a globalised superficiality in culture and consumption. Chapter one examines the widespread description of political freedom as so fundamental to the value of human life that death is preferable to its absence, and the associated view of death as a liberation from the constraints intrinsic to human existence. Sources ranging from Plato and Seneca to contemporary writers are shown to concur with the French Revolutionary dictum 'Vivre libre ou mourir', yet also reveal that the liberty they celebrate cannot be fully achieved without transcending the conditions of life in general. Chapter two examines descriptions of love as an idealized form of transcendence analogous to freedom, and the accompanying association of love with death in sources ranging from the Bible and St. Augustine to Shakespeare, Wagner, and Nietzsche. The central paradox described by McFarland is that although 'the absolute maximum of love is measured by the embracing of death' (p. 16), love is also celebrated as 'the greatest stimulus of human life' and the 'jewel of human existence' (p. 23). Chapter three discusses the growth of a 'mystique of freedom' in the Romantic period, showing how an initial enthusiasm for the aspirations of the French Revolution was replaced, particularly in Wordsworth and Coleridge, by an identification of freedom either with national independence or with 'a pure

transcendence divorced from political situation' (p. 37). Beethoven's *Fidelio* looks more emphatically towards 'the heavenly dwelling-place' of freedom (p. 41), while its theoretical apotheosis is found in Hegel's claim that 'the very history of the world is simply the advancement in the consciousness of freedom' (p. 24). As chapter four shows, however, the German Romantics' celebrations of freedom were combined with an emphasis on necessity which McFarland connects with Luther's view that man's only freedom lies in 'the acceptance of God's grace' (p. 48). Though many German Romantics 'fervently hailed the revolutionary advent of freedom', he notes, they were also so deeply influenced by Luther's denial of it that attempts to reconcile the two are central to their philosophies (pp. 58-9). Chapter five explores an analogous paradox in the theories of contemporary English empiricists, who though they 'helped undermine the theological fortifications of the ancien regime, and in that sense led to the [French] Revolution,...at the same time all denied freedom in the philosophical sense' (p. 67). Chapter six argues that the 'anticipatory joy' with which so many Romantics refer to a freedom located 'in the next impending future' is due to the fact that freedom 'does not exist in actuality' but only in transcendence (pp. 84, 102). Divorced from 'the relations of hope', freedom is nothing more than the inescapable choice described by Sartre (p. 107). The Romantics' particular preoccupation with transcendence, McFarland suggests in his conclusion, may have arisen partly from the fear of overpopulation expressed particularly by Malthus (p. 115); yet the 'illusion of freedom' has a psychological necessity which is timeless. 'If freedom . . . becomes so blatantly an illusion that it cannot be maintained as a focus of hope, where can humans find the transcendence so necessary to their mental health and spiritual dignity?' (p. 120). McFarland's emphasis on the necessity of being able to envisage a transcendence denied to us in practice thus highlights not only the value of works which, like those of the Romantics, assist us in envisaging that freedom, but also the importance of reviving the hopes whose disappearance makes freedom seem merely an illusion. 'Freedom's beacon', he concludes, 'shines less certainly and brightly than it once did . . . And the beleaguering of freedom affects nothing less than the meaning and hope of all mankind' (p. 125).

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Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. Pp. 280. Pb. £13.99. ISBN 0 415 88182 3. The main focus of this study is on gothic fiction of the 1790s, but the frame is situated in the 1990s. Summing up the 'rapid rise and fall' of the genre, Kilgour reflects on its anomalous afterlife:

Politically, it begins as a conservative reaction against a progressive and radical middle class; as that class establishes itself as the new status quo, the revolutionary possibilities of the form appear, so that today it may be read as subversive of bourgeois norms. What once made it seem regressive makes it now appear progressive, a foreshadowing of twentieth-century concerns. (p.42)

The growing fascination of critics with the oddities of eighteenth-century gothic -- its plagiarisms, conventionality, and extraordinary hold over the

imaginings of readers -- here becomes part of the drama. They are responding, even if unconsciously, to the urgency of its political investments. The French Revolution is seen by Kilgour as the true starting-point for gothic and its concerns, though Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto* feature by way of introduction. Walpole yoked 'reactionary nostalgia' (p. 17) to an innovative literary form to create the freakish hybrid, a gothic novel. In this, he shows his Whig ancestry. His literary practice is analogous to the Whig myth of the 'Ancient Constitution', which sees British liberties as a gothic inheritance, to be reaffirmed in the present in order to safeguard the future. But Burke was the most distinguished heir of the Revolution of 1688, and in his *Reflections on the Revolution of 1789* he presented the most compelling vision of organic social change, past and present harmoniously linked, to set against the disruptive impulses of enlightenment rationalism and political radicalism. It is primarily in relation to Burke that Kilgour's gothic novelists act and react. Burke's prominence must serve to explain the sudden leap to William Godwin as the first of the 'goths' under review. Kilgour presents full-dress interpretations of six novels, arranged in dialectical trios: Caleb Williams, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, *St. Leon*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk*, *The Italian*. The authors Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Ann Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis are paired off somewhat alchemically, to pick up a salient motif -- in order to note the 'reaction' when 'male' or 'female' gothic plots are combined with radical or conservative social agendas. There are certain drawbacks to this schema. Godwin and Wollstonecraft suffer most; there is able if unsurprising exposition of political themes, but (with only one gothic novel previously examined) an inadequate context for demonstrating the impact of genre in their fictions. More generally, the disparity between the small number of primary texts discussed and the large historical claims resting on them is a problem. Matters improve with the readings of Radcliffe and Lewis. These are lively and often ingenious. One of Kilgour's strengths is her attention to narrative strategies -- retrospect, foreshadowing, deferral, the management of multiple plots -- those vital components of Gothic fiction which are sometimes overlooked in all the excitement. Certain technical 'faults' and difficulties of the novels, sneered at by earlier critics, are cleverly re-integrated as interpretive loci. Most notably, Radcliffe's infamous 'Black Veil', which turns out to hide nothing much in *Udolpho*, becomes the occasion for an extended discussion of the uses of disjunction and bathos, and of veiling as an assertion of art over nature. But such insights cannot wholly compensate for the structural faults of Kilgour's own work; the political and historical arguments put forward in the first half are barely pursued in this section. Indeed, it is as if the author herself had lost interest in the thesis: the close textual reference is reserved for meditations on time, memory, imagination, the nature of writing. Ideological allegiances are inferred rather than demonstrated, and the results are disappointingly predictable. Radcliffe, we are told, is a supporter of the Burkean ideal of organic change (*Mysteries of Udolpho*); Lewis is an irresponsible demystifier; Radcliffe restates the case for conservatism on a more conciliatory note (*The Italian*). On the question of gender, the conclusions again lack substance and nuance. We are led to assume that the narratives are gendered according to the sex of the authors and of their main protagonists: Radcliffe's dominated by the relationship with the father, Lewis's by the mother; the moral nature of the

parent a metaphor for differing attitudes to revolution and patriarchal institutions. There is regrettably little cross-reference with Wollstonecraft at this juncture; and indeed, the political writers examined earlier tend to be invoked as a kind of shorthand, rather than in order to stage a dialogue. In the concluding section, Frankenstein is presented as a coda for the gothic of the revolutionary era, its post-enlightenment scepticism also a premonition of Postmodern sensibilities.

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Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. 274. ú35. ISBN 0 521 49655 1. B.E. Maidment, *Reading Popular Prints: 1790-1870*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996. Pp. 190. ú35. 0 7190 3370 5. One of the more curious and at the same time attractive hybrids to emerge out of the theoretical tension between a poststructuralist emphasis on the mediating effects of language and a historical concern for cultural specificity is the term 'deconstructive materialism' -- two words which bring each other into a crisis that can be reconciled only by what Alan Liu describes as an approach to history as an 'absence that is the very possibility of the "here and now."' Kevin Gilmartin doesn't use the term himself, but *Print Politics* is proof of the rewarding effects of an approach that combines a sophisticated capacity for close reading with shrewd historical judgement about the political pressures and strategic complexities that helped shape radical journalism in the early nineteenth century. Gilmartin aligns himself with a growing canon of critics who focus on popular radical culture as an end in itself rather than as a colourful prehistory capable of offering new insights into the supposedly autonomous category of Romantic literature. In doing so, he has produced an extensively researched and skilfully synthesized account of the radical weekly press that is consistently enhanced by the theoretical lessons he draws from the current revisionist debate about the bourgeois public sphere. *Print Politics* concentrates on the weekly periodical writings of five men -- William Cobbett, T.J. Wooler, Richard Carlile, John Wade, and Leigh Hunt, but it does so in a way which never forgets that radical print culture was 'a diffuse and overlapping set of practices' that extended well beyond the isolated act of authorship. Gilmartin's analysis opens the texts up to wider readings of issues such as the changing relationship between print and oral culture, the effects of prohibitive taxes on print, the tensions between professionalization and community solidarity, the interplay between seditious-libel trials and appeals to the courtroom of public opinion, and divisions between middle-class and artisan reformers. Questions of textual and political modes of representation (the politics of form and the radical writers' ambivalent relationship to the formal political sphere) remain locked in a suggestive and rewarding dialogue. The result is an impressive glimpse into compelling primary resources, but Gilmartin's interest in never simply archival. His main concern is to insist on the 'worldliness' of these texts by reading them as elements of a countersystem whose contradictions are an inevitable consequence and a potential advantage of any truly engaged form of oppositional criticism. Ironically, Gilmartin's greatest strength is sometimes his greatest weakness. His critical dexterity occasionally risks reading too much into the textual and discursive complexities that he discovers in radical

print culture. This may help to produce a melodramatic account of the writing that is consistent with the highly charged atmosphere of the post-Napoleonic era ('tortuous dialectic,' 'dizzying reversals,' 'dizzying narrative'), but it occasionally threatens to reveal more about Gilmartin's interpretive desires than about the writings themselves. It is not clear, for instance, that a radical pamphlet's references to the uncountable size of the audience viewing Henry Hunt's 1819 procession into London necessarily constitute an aporetic moment suggestive of a greater crisis of representation within the radical movement. To paraphrase Freud, sometimes a journalistic cliché is just a journalistic cliché. Acute sensitivity to contradictory messages and paradoxical statements sometimes risks overshadowing internal consistencies that we would do equally well to be aware of. These are minor reservations, however, which do little to weaken an important and much-needed addition to current critical debates. Ultimately, there is as much to learn from the ways that Gilmartin approaches the subject as there is from the depth of the subject matter itself. If one important aspect of new historical research is an investigation of print as a heterogeneous phenomenon crossing discursive boundaries and intersecting with various institutional practices, B. E. Maidment's *Reading Popular Prints, 1790-1870* reminds us that print culture extended to visual as well as literary forms of representation. These divisions, which have been reinforced by our own institutional boundaries (English Literature versus Art History), often blind us to the diverse and potent effects of their interfusion. Warning against this sort of oversight, Maidment insists on the democratic nature of the print trade: multiply produced and (sometimes) signed for a mass market of popular literature, and situated at the intersection of oral, visual, and literary culture. Some of his theoretical statements may seem reductively self-evident (i.e., that texts are markers of a semiotics of culture rather than historical windows giving us some immediate access to 'real' social conditions). But this is more than balanced by his engaging tone of personal modesty, and by his success in reading these prints as unstable representations of diverse social perspectives which, because they can never be perfectly subordinated to any one intended message, reveal the ideological conflicts of any dominant social group. Concentrating on the network of social narratives that inhere in any print, on the interplay between visual and written components within each text, and on the influence of the various technological processes employed, Maidment uses four particular case studies to support his claim that the supposedly 'lesser' art forms are sophisticated signifying processes. Each study forms the basis of a separate chapter: the 1791 burning of the Albion Mill -- a disputed symbol of industrial progress or displaced labour; the return home of the labourer as the completed promise of domestic fulfilment or drunken threat to the family's peace; the educated dustman as an icon of the aspirations of the artisan classes or satirical denunciation of their cultural pretensions; and depictions of women's suicides as naturalistic records of social concern or melodramatic scenes of puerile voyeurism. Each instance provides a context within which Maidment is able to give full play to the much cited but less frequently demonstrated concept of heteroglossia by unobtrusively gathering together traces of overlapping and often sharply conflicting discursive traditions that are inscribed in the prints, revealing the obsessions and anxieties of their age. The patience and interest

with which he explores this process will make this a useful book for all students of print culture in the Romantic and Victorian eras.

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Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Pp. 217. ISBN 0 19 818370 4.

Jerome McGann's rather quixotic object is to meet poetry 'on its own terms', resisting the 'mind's will to intellectual adequacy' and theoretical completion (9). He sets out to rescue a tradition that exploits 'non-semantic and transconceptual resources' from the neglect of New Critical orthodoxies. Writers such as Baillie, Barbauld, Robinson, Yearsley, and Hemans can hardly be said to have been 'disappeared' by such orthodoxy -- many now have their own Web sites -- but McGann insists on their aesthetic qualities rather than the content that has attracted many modern critics to them. McGann follows feminist writers like Anne K. Mellor in outlining a 'revolutionary', alternative Romantic tradition, expressed in the opposition of 'women/ practical expression/ affective language/ heart' to 'man/ conceptual writing/ language of ideas/ head' (47). Any theoretical consistency implied by these paradigms is, however, resisted. A variety of critical idioms is employed to correct the inadequacies of New Criticism and 'canonical Romanticism', sometimes with paradoxical piquancy. McGann delivers short, densely rhetorical lecturettes submitting individual poems to critical readings derived from Paterian appreciation, projective verse, imagism, speech-act theory, dialogism, economics, and Nietzschean deconstruction. In the way of New Critical reading, he finds instances of ambiguity, paradox, and word play that are never less than 'stunning'. The style is heavily masculine, ponderously authoritarian, repeatedly bludgeoning its 'vital' or 'crucial' points into the hapless reader, who is also commanded to read 'against the grain' of the given interpretation (70). A previously published critical dialogue in *Noctes Ambrosianae* style strikes a more playful, sceptical note, questioning the ease with which even an alternative criticism can construct its own objects. The scope of the book, covering works by some two dozen writers, mostly from the period 1780-1830, defies comprehensive review. The main theme, however, is the theoretical discrimination of sensibility and the sentimental in a historical tradition with its own continuities in Victorian and Modern times. Canonical Romanticism itself is infiltrated by sensibility, as McGann's allusive style stresses, though it seeks to surpass it in gestures of transcendence. Sensibility and sentimentality, difficult to separate in historical usage, yield a kind of innocence/experience distinction when theorized in terms of Schiller's naive and sentimental. Sensibility celebrates the senses and passions, the beauties of the world they half-create, and human relationships, pre-eminently the maternal and the erotic. It strives to realize the 'wisdom of the body' in a paradoxical language of 'conscious' blushes, sighs, and 'involuntary' self-contradictions. Sentimentality, more sophisticated and self-reflexive, attempts to recapture the unfallen world of sensibility, an attempt marked by elegiac yearnings and consciousness of artifice. While the naive is recognized as a creation of the sentimental, some chronological succession is implied. Maternal participation in a Blakean child-vision is possible for Baillie and Barbauld, but for Hemans the cherished domestic ideal is an empty dream. The Sapphic eroticism of 'Perdita' Robinson re-imagines cultural history in

terms of feeling, whereas in Landon's eroticism one is aware of manipulation and 'bad faith' (146). The belated sentimentalists cannot forget their fallen knowledge and only recapture the wonder of sensibility by stumbling into ignorance, like Keats with his schoolboy howler about Cortez. A historical perspective in which sentimentality re-establishes the traditional cultural and sexual orders joyfully overthrown by sensibility is hinted at but remains at the periphery of McGann's concern. Historically, indeed, the styles do more than 'breed into one another'. Would his female poets of dangerous, self-lacerating, primitive passion (sensibility) have been quite so open about it if their passions were not also linked with the noble, civilized (sentimental) capacity to feel for others? The major Romantics depart from this tradition in their irritable reaching after absolutes and affirmations. McGann's discussion of Coleridge's 'Aeolian Harp' is a masterly demonstration of the successive adoption and criticism 'from within' of the poetics of the effusion. Byron's despair is feminized in the paradigm of sensibility: He suffers the fate of the fallen woman or of naive poetry fallen into experience, but his grand gestures of defiance are foreign to the genre. The sentimental elegist finds no strength in anything remaining but accepts pure loss, participating in the commodification of poetry with a (saving?) ironic awareness of its degradation. In Romanticism McGann regrets the loss of a naive responsiveness to the quotidian as miraculous, a Nietzschean innocence and play in which theology and philosophy themselves (in the work of William Jones and Erasmus Darwin) are levelled to the 'rhetorical dance of ... figures' (134). Sensibility is performative, not constative. Its whole-hearted commitment to the processes of life and human relationship (as opposed to Wordsworth's 'geophysical' focus) accepts their transience. Its delight in the creative transformations of fancy is balanced by a consciousness of their fragility. McGann gives us tradition with only aesthetic values, imagination without its truth-claims, intellectual beauty without Ideal, verbal artifice without iconicity. He has 're-imagined' tradition in a thoroughly post-modern way.

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David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism*. Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics Series. Stanford University Press, 1996. Pp. 467. Hb ú35. Pb ú12.95. ISBN 08047 2618 3, 08047 2694 9. A major study of Goethe's lyric poetry is long overdue, and this book, even though it covers only the first decade of his work, is especially welcome. The dominant tradition of Goethe criticism has been overwhelmingly positivist, inescapably so, it seems, given the wealth of biographical detail available to critics and the rootedness of Goethe's production in the circumstances of his life. Goethe himself describes his poetry as 'occasional' and the characterization of his writings as 'fragments of a great confession' seems to validate the time-honoured approach. One of the immensely refreshing qualities of Wellbery's book, therefore, is that it makes a decisive break with this tradition. The approach taken -- in a sequence of detailed, penetrating and subtle analyses of a number of the most famous early poems such as 'Mahomets Gesang', 'Prometheus', 'Harzreise im Winter' etc. -- concentrates on the poetic rhetoric, the 'figurations' of the verse and might be described as 'New Critical' were it not for the fact that the more immediate

influences on Wellbery's style of reading are (broadly) semiotics, deconstruction and psychoanalysis. The scope of the book is, however, far more ambitious than this description might suggest. Through his analysis of the figurative language of the poems, Wellbery succeeds in bringing to light a nexus of ideas and problems -- concerning poetic subjectivity, language, genius, love, for example -- which underlie the diversity of Goethe's production and lend it its coherence. Further, the book seeks to locate these matters in relation to the development of the new forms of sensibility and thought which we customarily regard as characteristic of Romanticism. Certainly, the work has its flaws: a bibliography would be useful, and the index could be more helpful. But these are minor. More importantly, it is badly in need of a concluding chapter to pull its themes together and give an overview of the ground covered; as it stands, the work simply stops. Also, given the expectations engendered by the title, historians of romanticism are likely to be a little perplexed and possibly disappointed. The book's subject is predominantly Goethe's early lyric from Sesenheim to the end of the 1770s, and consideration of romanticism comes a very distant second. Furthermore, as far as this book is concerned, romanticism might as well be a German monopoly. Except for occasional references to Rousseau, there is hardly a glance outside the sphere of German literature: passing allusions to Young, Wordsworth, Poe are to be found, but not a mention of Shelley, say, in the context of a long discussion of the figure of Prometheus. Even allowing for the self-imposed and perfectly legitimate restriction of the enquiry to German romanticism, there will be some cause for concern. Wellbery argues the 'epochal significance' of Goethe's early lyric poetry, something few will be inclined to dispute, but the evidential basis for the larger claims, for example that certain motifs and figures contained in the early lyric represent an 'originary moment' within romanticism, is narrow: there are excursions into, among other works, Wieland's *Agathon*, Novalis's *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf*, a poem of Eichendorff's, but they are few and not extensive. This does not imply that the argument is wrong, merely that it is suggestive rather than compelling. Wellbery has undoubtedly written an immensely intelligent book, if one which tends to display its own cleverness with rather too much self-satisfaction, but it is foreseeable that its approach and its rather rebarbative rhetorical style will not endear it to some in the mainstream of Goethe scholarship in Germany. This would be regrettable, for the book contains many fresh insights into Goethe's early poetry. However much may one disagree on points of detail the book causes one to reread familiar and not so familiar Goethe texts with an enhanced understanding of their complexities and their coherence. One cannot ask more of a work of criticism. Those interested in romanticism in other contexts, English or European generally, will find much in this book which, if not directly relevant to their area, is nevertheless suggestive and stimulating, and thanks to the English translations accompanying the quotations in German, they will also find it accessible. Wellbery is an acute reader, and his book is an original, important and valuable work: it may prove an influential one also. No university library will want to be without a copy.

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Andrea K. Henderson, Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774-1830. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 Pp.198. ú30. ISBN 0 521 48164 3. This is one of those rare books which succeeds in re-orientating received ideas about Romanticism and in transforming our understanding of the discursive contexts within which Romanticism developed. Henderson's project is 'to historicize Romantic subjectivity' not by grounding the Wordsworthian model of the profound self in its historical context (though she also does that) but 'by exploring and contextualizing other, competing models of the self that were produced during the period' (p.2). Her argument is that the model of deep subjectivity which we now take as a defining characteristic of Romanticism was simply one of a number of alternative but equally 'Romantic' accounts of subjectivity produced in the period -- indeed, that even Wordsworth's oeuvre reveals radically different accounts of the self to that developed in *The Prelude*. Henderson's project involves reading novels, poems, and dramatic texts alongside 'non-literary' genres such as philosophical treatises, political tracts, and medical monographs. In doing so, she employs a range of theoretical paradigms in ways which are responsive to the theoretical issues raised by the texts themselves. Indeed, one of the things I most like about the book is the way Henderson allows texts of the Romantic period to recast contemporary theoretical arguments. Henderson makes good her claims through a number of intriguing readings of early Gothic novels, Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon' and *Childe Harold*, the generic dialogue between Percy Shelley's *The Cenci* and Mary Shelley's *Matilda*, and *The Heart of Midlothian*, showing how these texts develop a number of different models of identity which expose potential problems with deep selfhood and resist capitalist commodification (in fact, the two are sometimes seen as dangerously analogous). Yet the most exciting and suggestive part of the book is the opening chapter's attention to the discursive context of Romantic subjectivity itself. Henderson begins by examining the changing models of subjectivity which are implicit in eighteenth-century medical monographs about childbirth, which not only attempted to discredit traditional midwifery (carried out mostly by women) in favour of a new 'professional' and 'scientific' midwifery (carried out mostly by men), but also tended to represent childbirth as a mechanical process producing children implicitly figured as a commodity. Henderson shows that William Smellie's *Set of Anatomical Tables* (1754) implies that childbirth takes effect through the agency of a midwife 'represented as a worker at the machine of the maternal body' (p.14) - an account which effectively eliminates the role of the mother (p.16). Elizabeth Nihell's treatise on midwifery of 1760 criticizes Smellie's reduction (metaphorically in his text and literally in his teaching practice) of the mother's body to a 'doll-machine' or 'wooden-woman,' and attempts to reassign agency in delivery 'to a mythical nature figure' (p.19). At the end of the century, William Hunter's *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus* effects a move 'toward a more humanized representation of the fetus, and toward an animalistic, rather than a mechanistic, conception of the mother' (p.20). Henderson claims that Hunter's account of nature as feminine and unfathomable to 'pert philosophers' can be seen as 'an early form of the nature of Romanticism' -- for Hunter, obstetric practice ideally involved the midwife passively observing the miracle of nature's own efficacy as it 'work[ed] at its own pace through the mother'

(pp.25, 20, 25). Henderson argues that this shift of emphasis between Smellie and Hunter is intrinsically related to a transformation in theories of generation in the eighteenth century. Basically, various 'preformationist' models (which assumed that the foetus was from the outset a miniature fully formed being) were displaced at the end of the century by epigenetic theories which argued that the foetus developed and elaborated itself in the womb. This was effectively a 'biology of change' which, Henderson suggests, 'could only find a truly receptive audience around the turn of the century, in the age of revolutions' (p.32). Indeed, by down-playing the role of the parents in the formation of the foetus and focussing instead on the child's own self-unfolding, epigenetic theory 'offered ... the perfect high Romantic model of human development: a child is less indebted to its parents and its genealogy than to itself for its growth, and to whatever extent the child is not credited with that growth, it is understood as the work of a (non-mechanical) nature' (p.32). In effect, then, Henderson is presenting an alternative or complementary account to Coleridge's philosophical narrative of the shift from mechanistic to Romantic models of subjectivity. Thus it is intriguing that epigenesis was largely a development of German embryological theory and that, as Henderson shows, Kant argued in favour of epigenesis in his Critique of Judgement. Henderson concludes her opening chapter by examining two poems addressed to unborn children written by women in the 1790s, showing that 'women of the period did not all share a single view of childbirth' (p.34). Via quotations from Kristeva's Powers of Horror, Henderson suggests that 'In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a child must, of necessity, resist a strong connection to its mother in order to establish itself as a self-made subject' (p.37). Yet the generative richness of this chapter as a whole leads me to make connections with the Romantic myth of the poet as epigenetically self-generated -- that is, Henderson's argument allows us to contextualise and reread Harold Bloom's account of the Romantic poet's anxiety to occlude his (or her?) debts to poetic fathers (and mothers?). Henderson's argument also makes me want to return to the various models of generation and development in Wordsworth -- the account of the mother-child relation in *The Prelude*, the claim that 'The Child is Father of the Man,' the anti-epigenetic proposition that the child comes into the world 'trailing clouds of glory,' and so on.

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