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**Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, eds. *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. 287. hb £37.50. ISBN 0 521 59143 0.**

Five years ago, I spent the winter travelling around Britain and America, visiting rare book rooms all over each country, which in January and February can be extremely cold. So I remember with particular warmth the librarian who made me cup after cup of hot tea while I sifted through William Wilberforce's manuscripts. It was to her I confided that I was not really a historian at all, just a Romantic scholar thinking about British colonialism. She said, in that meticulously helpful librarian kind of way, 'I can't think of a single way those two topics are connected, except -- there is the engraving William Blake did for that traveller -- John Stedman'. As it turns out, Blake's engraving 'Europe supported by Africa and America' is the perfect metaphor for Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson's *Romanticism and Colonialism*. Almost anyone who is interested in the connection between Romanticism and the spread of the British empire knows this striking image of the three continents depicted as nude women of stunningly different skin tones. Though they stand on quasi-equal footing, and though their supple arms are linked in a sisterly embrace, they are joined by a heavy rope. Whether this rope represents a bond of mutual support or mutual strangulation is a question Blake seems to have left tantalizingly ambiguous. The essays in *Romanticism and Colonialism* struggle with questions at both ends of the rope. In fact, what this book does best, in essay after essay, is resurrect the ghosts of colonial and literary past to admonish and instruct, to deepen and reframe, our understanding of the monolithic term 'colonialism' of world history and the equally monolithic term 'Romanticism' of literary history. What you get with this careful historical and literary reconstruction is a book where neither term is what you thought it was. Fulford and Kitson begin the book with a detailed blue-print of the most recent work undertaken in colonial and cultural studies. Names commonly associated with post-colonial theory -- Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Kwame Anthony Appiah -- are not merely tossed off, like empty chatter at a Prufrockian dinner party, but are provocatively balanced against the specific dilemmas faced by writers of the Romantic period. 'Rather than working at the purely theoretical level' say Fulford and Kitson, 'the essays in this volume are more interested in developing applications of some of the perspectives opened' by theorists (p. 10). As a result, *Romanticism and Colonialism* reaches deeper and further than any approach that merely applies concepts stamped out by post-colonial theorists to yet another literary text. The writers of these essays have joined theoretical concerns with historical research and literary insight. Hence, a great energy emanates from the essays in *Romanticism and Colonialism*. James McKusick's "'Wisely Forgetful": Coleridge and the Politics of Pantisocracy', Timothy Morton's 'Blood Sugar', and Nigel Leask's "'Wandering through Eblis"; absorption and containment in Romantic exoticism' stand as particularly pulsating examples. Leask, for instance, begins and

ends his essay with Humboldt's 'Physical Portrait of the Tropics', which, he tells you, is an 'encyclopaedic digest of information about the tropics, in the guise of an image, a sort of informational hypertext' (p. 166). From here, Leask introduces you to the fascinating world of the 'panorama', the Romantics' equivalent of today's Omni-Max theatres, where early nineteenth-century viewers were 'absorbed' into images of exotic landscapes --Robert Ker Porter's 'The Storming of Seringapatam', for instance. Leask then asks how this kind of exotic 'absorption' was also used by Romantic writers and poets such as William Jones and Robert Southey. Fulford and Kitson have divided the essays in the collection along geographic lines. 'Arranged in a broadly chronological order', they comment, 'the chapters collected here examine representations of individuals and societies in the Western Coast of Africa, the Caribbean, Venice, the South Sea Islands, America, the Ottoman and Hebrew Middle East, as well as India' (p. 8). Right away, you get a sense that the editors see this topic as beyond easy categorization. In fact, you learn that where colonial and literary history meet is the messiest of places. The essays explore how sugar turned to blood and blood to anti-slavery rhetoric in Coleridge, how Anna Yearsley--combining the language of race and class--referred to herself as a 'savage', how Phillis Wheatley's London poetry tour might have influenced Blake's 'Little Black Boy', how writers as different as Burke and William Jones were drawn to Oriental fantasy, how Indian jugglers touring the British countryside in 1819 made it into Hazlitt's theory of imagination, how the spread of colonial diseases cast a shadow over Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, and how Coleridge and Southey imagined Pantisocracy as a Tahitian paradise. In essence, Fulford and Kitson have gathered together a group of writers willing to roll up their scholarly shirt sleeves to do the real work of historical investigation that any successful account of colonialism and literature entails. Perhaps the most striking example of this appears in the essay 'The Jamaican journal of M.G. Lewis', by D.L. Macdonald. Tucked away modestly in a footnote at the end of the essay, Macdonald writes, 'When I visited [Monk Lewis's] tomb in 1992, it was completely ruinous, and almost completely buried in garbage: understandably enough, the woman who lived next to it did not cherish this relic of her colonial heritage. As I took photographs of it, she asked me if I would take it away' (p. 203). This kind of commitment to digging through the rubbish of the colonial past, to fortifying theoretical concepts and literary insights with historical detail, makes *Romanticism and Colonialism* not only a fascinating book, but a scholarly benchmark for anyone who is interested in the intersection of culture, history, and literature.

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Paul Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998. Pp. 217. hb £27.50 (\$39.50). ISBN 0 691 05794 X.

Paul Magnuson aims his critical prose point blank at the limitations of much of the discussion of Romanticism in the 1980s. He swiftly shoots at formalist and deconstructive criticism, arguing that 'an unhistorical and idealized reading, whether done to praise poets or to criticize them, is blind to the local, to the particular innuendo, to the moment that gives the utterance its uniqueness' (p. 21). But his heaviest fire is reserved for new historicism, which claims to read works in their contemporary contexts, yet repeatedly concludes that they are merely 'tendentious denials and evasions of social issues' or 'unknowing repetitions of a suspect ideology' (p. 3). What rides into town after the villains who had previously run it have been wasted? Magnuson himself with the ghost of Habermas, revived and revised, a ghost

in whom historicism and formalism are both raised from the dead. Magnuson reads poems in the public discourse they enter when published, but aims to include in that discourse all the elements that Habermas omitted. Whereas Habermas's public sphere is bourgeois, being composed of private individuals engaging in consensual discussion in journals and magazines, Magnuson's revised version includes radicals, dissenters, and blasphemers. It encompasses law and libel. It does not distinguish literature per se from other language, seeing other forms of public utterance as equally 'rhetorical and artful, allusive, theatrical, and densely packed with implication and innuendo' (p. 22). Magnuson's methodology, that is, is to apply traditional literary values to texts traditionally considered non-literary, and then render traditional 'literature' in the context of these texts. If this is less radical than he seems to think, it is still worthwhile, there being so many 'rhetorical and artful' texts of the time, well-known to the Romantics, but largely neglected today. Magnuson has another shot in his locker too: he will, he declares, situate works in their published moment, locate them as texts shaped by the context in which they were printed ('context' here meaning everything from typeface and title page to the other texts printed in the same volume and to the prestige of the publisher). Poems, then, are shown to have a material existence which helps to shape the imagined worlds they conjure up. Or rather, they have material existences different on each occasion that they are presented, not least because they are often heavily revised. Magnuson puts his theory into practice in detail. He considers the implications of the signatures and dedications with which poets chose to offer their work to public and patrons. These, he shows, were often full of coded meaning. So were allusions which often referred to contemporary political discourses -- as when Byron contrasted his view of chivalry, in *Childe Harold*, with Burke's. Magnuson concludes from this 'An age that we have agreed to call Romantic, an age we have defined by the genre of romance, writes the genre of romance between Burke's and Paine's versions of chivalry and quest, between idealizations in the name of legitimacy and scepticism in the name of reform' (p. 49). Magnuson's first lengthy discussion is of a poem in which the romance of nature has often been read as part of a private meditation, 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison.' He considers its significance when in manuscript in 1797 and when published in 1800, demonstrating that it gained a political valency by virtue of its publication in *The Annual Anthology* and its references to Charles Lamb. Following in the footsteps of Nicholas Roe, Kelvin Everest and Carl Woodring, Magnuson develops an analysis of the poem's resonance among Unitarian and Jacobin radicals. He then assesses 'Frost at Midnight' as Coleridge's 'defense in the court of public opinion' against Tory caricatures of him and other reformers in *The Anti-Jacobin*. The poem's public significance, he concludes, 'is that it presented a patriotic poet' (p. 78) when the nature of patriotism was under heated discussion in the nation. Turning to the 'Ancient Mariner,' Magnuson finds that it 'is not a poem that avoids or evades political issues' (p. 97). He relates it to the German dramas of Kotzebue and Schiller -- dramas agreed by British critics to be Jacobinical. This move is unexpected and fruitful. It makes sense of Southey's famous comment that the poem is a very Dutch attempt at German sublimity and suggests that Coleridge's Gothic was deeply marked by German, not French Jacobinism. The fifth chapter is also fresh and welcome. It reconfigures Byron's *Don Juan* as a poem whose style had a particular political and literary point - to undermine the 'legitimacy' of Southey and the establishment for whom Southey wrote. Byron's originally unpublished Dedication is the key, Magnuson suggests, to understanding Canto 1. Intended to be read by the intimate audience of friends and advisors in the circle of Murray, Byron's publisher, the Dedication shows that the

poem's 'style originated in the circle of its first reception' (p. 123). Analysing the Dedication, Magnuson finds it to be composed of allusions to Southey's own public self-justifications as well as to Augustan satire. One of the more interesting facets of this analysis is the creation of a rich and nuanced semantic field for a number of crucial political terms in the Regency. Magnuson, in other words, does more than list the precise contexts in which a term was used, for he calibrates exactly the subtle differences in import that it acquired. The last chapter is the best. Keats is its subject. Precisely because there has been less historicist criticism of Keats than of any other Romantic, Magnuson's location of the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' in the debates over the merits of the Elgin marbles seems most original. These debates, Magnuson shows, were implicitly and sometimes explicitly political. And Keats's poem had a precise location within them, for it was published in the *Annals of the Fine Arts*, a context that rejected the ideals of the Royal Academy and the legitimacy it supported. Placed amidst a new politics of taste as announced by Hunt and Hazlitt, and as attacked by Lockhart and other conservatives, Keats's poem 'challenges the authority that would deny liberty's origins by idealizing art and making art's idealizations a royal institution' (p. 204). As so often, the critic's verdict on a writer reflects his own interests: Magnuson's view of Keats's applies equally to Reading Public Romanticism. Magnuson aims to free poetry from the idealizations imposed on it by the U.S. academy, to make it speak to us of liberty by restoring the way in which it spoke in its time. His is a historicist liberalism which, meticulous in method and insistent in tone, is authoritative in its anti-authoritarianism.

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Simon Kövesi (ed.), *John Clare: Love Poems*. Bangkok: M&C Services Company Ltd, 1999. Pp. 116. pb £7. ISBN 974 7279 00-2. Available by mail order from M&C Services, PO Box 3993, Glasgow, Scotland G51 3YH

Lit by the lambent eroticism of poems like 'The Nutting', this collection of love poems is itself an incendiary device lobbed over 'the fence of ownership' into the flammable heart of Clare studies. With more than a dash of defiant antinomianism, Simon Kövesi presents these poems without the imprimatur of Professor Eric Robinson, a noted Clare scholar and putative holder of copyright on most of Clare's work. Prof. Robinson may view him as something other than a modern Prometheus (one of Dyer's 'idle pilf'ers', perhaps) but Kövesi's enthusiasm for his subject is palpable and his attempt to recuperate Clare from the sideshow of rustic marvels by presenting his work in a more accessible format is an admirable one. Working from original manuscripts, Kövesi has brought together some sixty-six of Clare's shorter lyric poems. He is pledged to avoid intrusive alteration of 'metre, image, dialect, or pronunciation', but has standardized some of the spellings and added 'sparse punctuation' to produce a more 'readerly' text. Readers (present or potential) who fear to encounter a style-doctored, 'virtual' John Clare, as much as they dislike seeing him embalmed in 'le style agripauvre', need not fear. The history of early editorial butchery that appends to Clare's work is well enough known and Kövesi's introductory notes state his dedication to the originating spirit of Clare's poetic utterance: 'Clare's written texts are not pure or perfect creations -- they are rough and ready for an editor's work. An editor has to be careful to keep as close to Clare's original intentions as possible. (p. xv). Kövesi's words must inevitably point to one of the many cruxes of textual study, however, for even if the 'warm scribe', the hand of the author, were not already in the grave we would still (as readers and editors) face

the postmodern dilemma as to the possibility of ever apprehending (rather than 'reading in') 'original' authorial intention. In Clare's case the traces of interpretation are doubly problematized by the anomalous provenance of his manuscripts. Of the later poems written when Clare was at High Beech and Northampton asylums, many only survive as transcriptions. The unreliability of Clare's amanuenses is dourly noted by John Lucas, who remarks that if we consider what W.F. Knight (house-steward at Northampton Asylum) 'thought himself entitled to do to Clare's manuscripts there is not much hope that what we have here is what Clare originally intended'. Lucas admonishes Robinson and Powell, editors of *The Later Poems of John Clare*, for reproducing Knight's version of the poem beginning 'I hid my love when young':

[they] cannot be correct in wanting to read the first line as "I hid my love when I was young while I..." for the meaning has to be "till" not "while". The syntactic structure is repeated in lines 3 and 4: "I hid my love while I was young/Till I could not bear to look at light". I accept that Knight wrote down "while" but, as Grigson recognized, "till" is the right word.

Ironically, Kövesi uses the same form as Robinson: 'I hid my love when young while I/Couldn't bear the buzzing of a flye'. I do not find that accessibility is eased in this instance, nor is it facilitated by the punctuation in 'I'd gaze my soul on thee', where a rogue colon breaks apart the poem's central conceit, i.e. that the lover desires to be a flower in his mistress' bosom:

My heart's own love could I but be: A flower I'd gaze my soul on thee. (p. 69)

The blurb and Editorial notes also contain a small number of spelling and typographical errors and the scansion of 'My Mary' is hobbled by the omission of 'that' in stanza 21:

For though in stature mighty small, And near as thick as thou art tall, The hand made thee, [that] made us all My Mary (p. 12)

These few quibbles aside, the overall quality of the volume's orthography and the clarity of the mise-en-page is pleasingly crisp. The actual inclusion of 'My Mary' may have more provocative implications for the reception of the work by women readers. How 'My Mary' qualifies as amorous discourse is certainly unclear. The poem is in some sense a riposte to Cowper's poem of the same name; and blasts Cowper's condescending sentimentality with rumbustious mockery. But in each case it seems that these are poems by men speaking to men about women. Mary is figured as a Bahktinian grotesque, 'ugly, silly, droll and rough....O'er head and ears in grease and muck', with hair like 'Grunter's bristly hide' who belongs in the literary tradition of parodic excess, of scatological satire. This pig-swilling 'stump of Eve' is surely more deeply imbrued in the Swiftian scurrility and misogynistic bile that erupts in Clare's 'Don Juan'. The influence of Clare's peers and precursors, especially Byron and Pope, in providing templates of textual misogyny is an issue here, but even in his tenderest lyrics Kövesi believes that Clare's 'engagement with femininity is never fully comfortable as he figures woman in such an abstracted and often objectifying way....Any consummation is realised in the creation of verse, not in the conjoining of lovers'. (p. xiii). The reader need not look far to find instances of specular objectification and the assumed primacy of the masculine gaze: 'one turns...to look again,/To see if she be handsome, fair or plain;/....And thus we turn to praise - who questions why?/Ask thine own heart when beauty passes bye.' (p. 33). Phantasmal

visions and fantasies of idealized women abound, but few are realized with the lyrically powered specificity that is the function of Clare's great genius. Many of the apostrophized 'Marys' are assembled from a fetishistic stock of literary tropes: ruby lips, creamy bosoms, downcast eyes, trembling soft hands. Others are figured as voiceless revenants, disembodied muses, ethereal and isolate: 'I never hear thy voice nor know/Its sound in fancy's ear,/A silent shade where e'er I go/In beauty hovers near'. ('My spirit lives in silent sighs', p. 77) Clare wrote of his early passion for the young Mary Joyce: 'she was a beautiful girl and as the dream never awoke into reality her beauty was always fresh in my memory' (my emphasis). Clare never awoke to find his dream true and his prevailing tone is of yearning and loss: 'I sleep with thee and wake with thee/And yet thou art not there; I fill my arms with thoughts of thee,/And press the common air' ('To Mary', p. 66). Some vibrant exceptions rub the quick of rural life: 'the loud laugh of maidens in the sun' during haymaking; the warm skin of a woman with 'well-burn'd' arms; 'clover bottles swarm[ing] full-blown'. But there is no bliss of consummation, or even of solitude. Eidolons of erotic fantasy cannot be substantiated, much less held. Like the world Clare thought he knew, they dislimn and 'pass like shadows' into a cold void of unknowing. If 'we are what we remember', then Clare's anomic vision of 'disremembered' chaos in 'Invite to Eternity' is a proleptic cry against his own descent into nothingness:

Say maiden wilt thou go with me, Through this sad non-identity, Where parents live and are forgot And sisters live and know us not?

For this and more, Kövesi's edition is eminently worth reading. The gendered subject-positioning of Clare's poems may mean that our engagement is 'never fully comfortable'. But the dynamic of critical revaluation - thinking through the fence of ownership - is a pleasure well worth pursuing.

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Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture 1680-1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xvi + 262. hb £35. ISBN 0 521 551749.

In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft famously, and problematically, endorsed virtuous motherhood over female sexual desire, suggesting that the two are in fact inimical. Instead, her revolutionary claim was for women's right to autonomy as rational beings, and for an explicit connection between the private condition of motherhood and the public status of citizenship: 'speaking of women at large, their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that, which includes so many, of a mother'. During the 1790s particularly, this radical classical republican ideal of motherhood is shared by Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Catharine Macaulay, for example. It can also, at times, seem uncomfortably close to Hannah More's anti-revolutionary celebration of domesticity and maternity as the foundations of national identity. Though it ends in 1760, Toni Bowers's study provides a useful pre-history for these explicit politicizations of motherhood at the beginning of the Romantic period -- and particularly, perhaps, for the surprising extent to which writers from very different political positions seem to have shared assumptions about forms of domestic and public identity. The polemical writings of both Wollstonecraft and More have a common background in the kind of educational and conduct literature in which, in

Bowers's words, 'mothers were elevated as moral and religious exemplars and instructors' and 'motherhood came to epitomize the radical withdrawal of the domestic woman' (pp. 166-7, 28). Bowers refutes the common assumption that it was in the later part of the century that domestic manuals 'inaugurated a new British obsession with maternal behaviour' (p. 156). She argues against attributing too much originary importance to Rousseau's *Emile* and suggests that the key features of a middle-class ideal of virtuous motherhood -- an ideal increasingly identified as natural and universal -- were a significant preoccupation in all kinds of texts from the late seventeenth century onwards. These features she defines as: 'all-engrossing tenderness, long-term maternal breastfeeding, personal supervision and education of young children, complete physical restriction to domestic space, absence of sexual desire, withdrawal from productive labor' (p. 28); 'good motherhood' is hegemonically established as 'naturally separate from (and uniquely threatened by) participation in the public world' (p. 232). Unwilling in almost all cases to argue against maternal tenderness or educational responsibilities, or even against the absence of sexual desire, later female polemicists can be most clearly distinguished by the extent of their willingness explicitly to resist the concomitant imperative of withdrawal from public activity. In this context -- in spite of the scepticism of modern feminist commentators like Carole Pateman -- Wollstonecraft's insistence on motherhood as a category of citizenship takes on greater radical significance. Indeed, just a few years after the publication of *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft was herself posthumously seen as a kind of 'monstrous mother', the category with which Bowers begins her study and which she explores extensively in the second of the book's three main sections: on royal, monstrous, and domestic motherhood. Her introduction, 'Historicizing motherhood', starts with Hogarth's horrific image in *Gin Lane* of the drunken mother dropping her baby. This is just one example of 'the plot of maternal failure' which, Bowers claims, is 'one of the most obsessive and significant plots of Augustan narrative' (p. 1), the monstrous other to an emergent ideal of maternity which is increasingly defined as independent of economic and political particularities. In her concern to identify the virtuous mother's wider cultural meanings, and in her privileging of novels and conduct literature as 'technologies of motherhood', Bowers works within the broadly Foucauldian analysis of domestic femininity most influentially developed in Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (OUP, 1987). But Bowers seeks to make good the 'virtual absence of motherhood' in Armstrong's analysis, which she sees as ironically symptomatic of the 'denial of political relevance to maternity' in the course of the eighteenth century (pp. 21-2). By way of corrective, Bowers is concerned to make explicit the processes of analogy whereby discussions of domestic and of public authority can be read as mutually defining. She is also much more interested than Armstrong in 'the many shapes resistance takes' in the texts under discussion (p. 23). Bowers's analysis of domestic and national politics focuses on post-1688 debates on political authority, and specifically on representations of Queen Anne and the continuing perceived threat of Jacobitism through the first half of the eighteenth century. Thus in her suggestive and closely-argued section on royal motherhood, she reads Queen Anne's unsuccessful claim to be mother of the nation as both cause and symptom of an increasingly dominant separation between maternal and public authority. Paradoxically, Bowers argues, it was Anne's actual status as a mother (albeit one whose children had all died), together with Locke's critique of the tropes and practices of patriarchal kingship, which undermined her deployment of the kind of domestic symbolism so successfully mobilised by the (childless) Elizabeth I. And in her section on domestic

motherhood, Bowers reads Clarissa's moral isolation from and by her mother and father in Richardson's novel as 'a representation, from a particular Tory point of view, of the predicament of Augustan Britain, a nation orphaned by the abdication ... of its rightful king in 1688' (pp. 201-2), and suggests that, in *Pamela Part II*, patriarchal absolutism remains in force in the domestic realm at least. In the book's second section, on monstrosity, such analogies between domestic and national politics are for the most part left implicit as Bowers examines representations of bad and good mothers in novels by Defoe and Haywood. Her readings are always astute, and though her focus on mothering in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* is perhaps slightly too ruthlessly exclusive of other motivations and cultural pressures, it is often also genuinely illuminating. Bowers concludes with the case of Sarah Pennington, a woman who salvaged her reputation by publicly taking on the role of good mother in the conduct book she wrote to her absent daughters. But Pennington's adoption of this apparently unexceptionable identity is also, Bowers argues, an act of resistance. Unlike *Pamela*, Pennington 'insists on the priority of a wife's own reason and conscience in determining her maternal behavior, and rejects the code of passive obedience' (p. 227); her case proves that 'at any particular historical moment the expedients available for imagining and making present new versions of virtuous motherhood may prove sufficient after all, if we can summon the courage to make them our own' (p. 233). As this suggests, one of the added attractions of Bowers's deftly-argued account of an emergent maternal ideal is that it is offered as part of a history of the present, and engages explicitly with the still urgent politics of motherhood.

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Anne Janowitz ed., *Essays and Studies 1998; Romanticism and Gender*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998. Pp 176. hb £25. ISBN 85991 526 3. Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Romantic Visualities; Landscape, Gender and Romanticism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. Pp xxii + 222. hb £40. ISBN 0-312-21221-6.

The essays in the first volume explore and describe perceptions of what texts might constitute Romantic literature, considering also its periodic boundaries and inheritance for the late nineteenth century. Appropriately enough, the first essay by Gary Kelly addresses the meanings of history, exploring the response of a large number of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century women writers to what was at times a forbiddingly masculine discourse. Rapidly covering a great deal of ground, Kelly demonstrates the diverse strategies used by women writers to access the writing of history, including their historicizing forms of the *belle-lettres*, their use of the novel to write historiography, and of course their authorship of more "acceptable" forms of history, that is, histories for children, and histories about women themselves. However, more disturbing than Kelly's suggestions on the role writing women played in the founding of the modern liberal state, are the political issues raised in Mary A. Favret's essay. 'Flogging: the Anti-slavery Movement writes Pornography', examines the disturbing notion that the anti-slavery movement exploited the pornographic elements in their descriptions of brutality. After the range of these two essays, the next contributions explore the issues raised in the book's preface through examination of individual authors. The collection contains two essays on Barbauld, by William Keach and Josephine McDonagh, respectively entitled 'Barbauld, Romanticism, and the Survival of Dissent' and 'Barbauld's Domestic Economy'. The essays force an interesting reevaluation of Hazlitt's judgement of that 'pretty poetess', author of 'story-books for children', showing Barbauld writing at a particular stage in the negotiation

of the public and private (p. 44). Keach's essay notes her intellectual debt to the politics of dissent, while McDonagh's explores Barbauld's work around the newly-emerging discipline of political economy. From political economy as it is incorporated in Barbauld's work, the collection moves to a comparison of Irigaray's female economy of abundance with Wordsworth's grimmer visions of 'getting and spending'. This comparison is made by Sonia Hofkosh in 'Commodities Among Themselves: Reading/ Desire in Early Women's Magazines' in order to shift the focus from Wordsworth's entrepreneurial, individualist discourse of production to the version of consumption appearing in the early women's magazines of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Emma Francis's essay 'Letitia Landon: Public Fantasy and the Private Sphere' also concentrates on consumption, though in this case it is the consumption (and marketability) of the private and domestic which concerns her. Francis's essay touches upon the problem women's poetry represents for the notion of the Romantic period. She refers to the time when Landon wrote as the late Romantic period, the early Victorian period and the nineteenth century. The next essays in the collection also challenge a distinct notion of literary period with their accounts of Romantic afterlives. Daria Donnelly's essay 'Emily Dickinson and the Romantic Comparative' suggests that the Romantic extremity found in Dickinson's poetry by Yetman may be read as a resistance to elements of Romantic discourse. The inheritance of Romanticism is similarly complicated by Bridget Bennett. In "'Precious Allusions': Female Muses and Authorised Writing' she examines manifestations of Romanticism in the works of Henry James and Edith Wharton. Finally, Ira Livingston provides a summing up of sorts to a collection that continues the process of opening up Romanticism to different frameworks and approaches. His at times witty but hardly relaxing essay 'The "No-Trump Bid"' on Romanticism and Gender' replays some of the reasoning behind and the consequences of this approach.

Like *Romanticism and Gender*, Jacqueline Labbe's *Romantic Visualities; Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* also offers a kind of 'No-Trump Bid', moving away from the past studies which concentrated on the thought of the six male Romantic poets with regard to landscape. Labbe's study examines how the prospect view, with its apparent offer of cultural and political authority, was claimed, contested and reinterpreted during the Romantic period. The prospect view is associated with a language of visual and interpretative power, with disinterestedness, and the ability to reason and abstract, with, in short, the masculine. However, Labbe demonstrates that the language and invocation of the prospect became far more problematic in the Romantic period for even the male writer. The prospect view of the late eighteenth century might reveal rather too much, or the male poet, by too incautiously claiming its elevation for his poetry, might undermine its association with power. This latter was even more the case for the female writer who might wish to claim the elevation for her poetry but who was distanced even further from the prospect by gender. In her first chapter Labbe begins by rehearsing the association of the prospect view with abstraction, with the assumed disinterestedness of the landowner, and with the masculine, showing the concomitant association of the detailed view with the feminine, the particular and the vulgar. After complicating the picture by stressing the benefits of the particular and the interdependence of the two viewing positions, in the second chapter she shows how the viewer's relation to the masculine sublime and the feminine beautiful is similarly open to challenge. She explores women writers' claims to the sublime and challenges to the beautiful, demonstrating that under such pressures aesthetic categories were stretched and recreated. This account of aesthetic

categories as unstable and under stress is nicely illustrated by her discussion of Wordsworth's and Wollstonecraft's travel writing. In her third chapter she explores the sites of garden and bower, suggesting that the enclosure of the garden, an acceptably feminine space, can actually prove a liberating and subversive space for the woman writer. The isolation of the bower, however, has to be more carefully negotiated by the male writer in order to avoid a sense of entrapment. From the viewing of these sheltered sites, Labbe moves on in her next chapter to consider the more protracted spectacle of the tour. Labbe suggests that the travel writing favoured by critics showed evidence of classical learning, of abstraction and detachment, rather than emotion or detail. As such, Labbe posits that women readers were forced into an unsympathetic relationship with their much learned male guides, their ignorance of certain knowledge emphasized. Labbe sees it as potentially empowering that much travel writing by women rejects the prescribed detachment of the traveller, almost deliberately invoking the opposite position. Labbe then examines Wakefield's *Family Tour of the British Empire*, contrasting her inclusion of botany, history and geography with the determined generalisations of Wordsworth's guide. In discussing Wakefield, as elsewhere in the study, Labbe has rescued a neglected text with an extremely detailed and useful account, but refused to ghettoise it, giving instead a comparative reading that elucidates the practice of both writers. Labbe's fifth chapter similarly sets up an interesting series of comparisons, between Sir Joshua Reynolds's love of the general and his gendering of art, Mary Delany's flower paintings and Anna Seward's discussion of the influence of gender on the poet's picture painting. Labbe makes the necessary critical landscape of detail an intriguing place, particularly when exploring its more secluded corners. Her study illustrates that the Romantic landscape is as fractured and various as other aspects of Romantic discourse, shedding new light both on more canonical figures and their less well-known female contemporaries.

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Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (ed.), *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999. Pp. xvi + 226, hb £ 42.50. ISBN: 0 333 69151 2.

Primarily a selection of papers from a conference held at Birkbeck College in the summer of 1995, the present volume is one of those fortunate cases when the collected contributions also work as a book. Organized around central concepts and practices in British culture from 1730 to 1820, the essays succeed in yielding the picture of a canon in women's verse between the Augustan Age and Romanticism. The book's sections are structured around thematic, ideological and generic principles, although ideological concerns prevail because, as the editors make clear in their preface, the stress falls on 'rethinking' rather than merely 'rereading' women's verse from 1730 to 1820 (p. vii). And if this collection of essays confirms the importance of recuperating texts and reading them through our acquired skills, it also calls for (and exemplifies) appropriate and specific interpretive abilities to approach poetry by women, which may be different from those traditionally applied to poetry by men. In proposing an alternative scheme of reference from the male verse tradition, the title of the book identifies the Enlightenment as the inclusive cultural space of women poets working between the 1730s and the 1820s. Some of the essays in the volume carefully examine texts such as Elizabeth Carter's 'A Dialogue', Anna Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, or *An Original Essay on Woman*; whereas other contributions address more general issues such as canonical regimes, the creation of new canons on

the ashes of the 'old' ones, and the quality of the literary texts which are being rediscovered. Of course, it is not the first time that these problems have been discussed, yet the present volume interestingly examines them in the specific, and till recently understudied, context of women's verse as well as within an Enlightenment culture viewed and elaborated by women. The opening section of the volume is devoted to explorations of sensuousness, perceptions of the body, the contrast between body and soul, and the gendered poetics developed through these thematics. In a broad-ranging contribution, Margaret Anne Doody reconsiders eighteenth-century verse by women through some of the outstanding features which separate it from men's verse: its insistence on physical perceptions, the themes of animals and supernatural beings, the relation between the world and a fundamentally sensual centre of identity, and the relevance of Pythagorean metempsychosis in women poets' construction of a 'cosmos without stable hierarchies' (p. 10). The physical theme, with its textual and existential implications, is then further examined by David Shuttleton's account of the figure of the Bath poet Mary Chandler. This little-known writer is especially relevant as her poems critically engage with prevailing ideas of sex and gender and cannot be read apart from her deformed physical body which figures as text or subtext in her body of verse. The first section of the collection concludes with an essay by Lisa Freeman on Elizabeth Carter's 'A Dialogue' (1740-41), a poem that re-elaborates the ancient tradition of the body-soul dialogue to stake the claims of the feminized (and female) mind over the brutally sensuous (masculine) body. While the initial section opens new perspectives on the crucial Enlightenment terms of mind, rationality and sensorial perception, the essays in the second part concentrate on the political and more overtly feminist aspects of the poetic tradition from 1730 to 1820. Isobel Grundy examines in depth *An Original Essay on Woman* (1771), the 'author's preface' of which bears the name 'Mary Seymour Montague', and a text that needs to be reconsidered alongside other more famous rewritings of Pope's *Essay on Man* by women. Certainly pseudonymous (and possibly even the work of a man) the poem is worthy of attention because of its engagement with Pope in order to develop a defence of woman through the theoretical principles made available by the Baconian revolution. Anne Mellor then expands the theme of the elaboration of Enlightenment ideas in a female and feminist perspective by considering the traditions of the female poet and the poetess between 1780 and 1830 in a fine essay which has also appeared in *Studies in Romanticism* (1997). Maggie Favretti concludes this section by illustrating how Anna Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* subverts and exposes the limits of several basic features of the 'gentlemanly' ethos dominating literature well into the age of the reviews, in particular ideas of 'disinterestedness', the male gaze and the ideological implications of the point of view. The third section, about 'Protest and Patronage', opens with an essay by Mary Waldron on the fraught relationship between Ann Yearsley and Hannah More, as well as the intellectual implications of Yearsley's misrepresentation as a peasant poet. Further, Roger Sales analyzes another significant case study of patronage, reconstructing the circles of influence in which Charlotte Richardson, a York maidservant, lived, worked and published her poems. In contrast with Yearsley's rebellion and redefinition of herself and her verse, Richardson's case, especially the selling and advertizing of her work, is an example of how middle-class patrons were eager to market such literary texts as the expressions of the docile and malleable working classes. Away from the more sociological slant of this section, Part 4 of the volume turns to the patterns of subjectivity promoted by women's poetry. Kate Lilley examines the genre of the Georgic verse epistle to trace the interconnections between Martha Sansom,

Constantia Grierson and Mary Leapor and, more specifically, to evidence the intertextual and interpersonal relations between these figures fostered by the recreation of this classical genre. In addition, the 'writing of the self' in these texts is closely related to act of 'writing one's name', a phenomenon that Stuart Curran fascinatingly analyzes in his contribution. Curran carefully sifts young poets' verse acrostics of their names to reveal how these apparently negligible forms of inscription enable the authors' transformations and definitions of their subjective and professional identities. Later, the essay turns to consider the presence of the muse or the predecessor in women's verse, especially in poems addressed to one another where the poet writes herself through and across the predecessor's name. One of Curran's most insightful observations regards the intensely metascriptural character of women's poetry, which thus emerges as an art whose subject is often 'its own coming to being' (p. 156). The idea that art and selfhood design a situation of mutual exchange and support is carried forward by Judith Hawley in her analysis of Charlotte Smith's *Elegaic Sonnets*. These she interestingly reads as a complex narrative based on loss that, nevertheless, yields a 'vital' gain. By expanding mourning ad infinitum and resisting the traditional consolations of the elegy, Smith's collection also inaugurates an endless investigation of the idea of loss and its psychological implications, thereby avoiding the statutory closure of more traditional forms of elegy. The volume closes with a thoughtful essay by Elizabeth Eger on the role of the anthology in fashioning a female canon. Eger interestingly reconstructs the fortune of female poets in anthologies from the eighteenth century onwards, tracing the appearance, modification, and disappearance of a tradition of women poets, and concludes a very rich volume by opening it up to further questions. Eger achieves this end by taking on board Germaine Greer's definition of women's art as 'traditionally biodegradable' and by reminding the reader of several earlier attempts to (re)construct or re-evaluate a female poetic tradition. In spite of its inescapable variety, something the book does well is to stress the importance of critically reconstructive work. We still need to know that women writers wrested the idea of mind and body from male philosophical and fictional preserves, turned the mind into a feminized and female dimension, and placed it over the brutally materialistic and masculine body. We must be aware that women developed a poetics of sensations which both fits in the general Enlightenment culture but also contests several of its constitutive assumptions. It is important to be reminded that women polemically rewrote Pope's *Essay on Man* and that, in the Romantic period, they addressed and redefined the division of private and public and the attendant spheres of competence. Yet the volume also confirms that this type of research is not about definitive statements, reconstructed vistas, or the beautifully organized 'formal gardens' of literature. Instead, this research into a female poetic tradition is about a yet to be completed activity. This collection is at its most stimulating when it addresses the 'feminist agenda of rediscovery' (p. vii) starting from its ideological basis. Elizabeth Eger's essay thus quotes Lillian Robinson's diagnosis of the dilemmas of feminist scholarship and the dangers represented by the fact that it has been more successful in reconstructing a canon than in gaining canonical recognition for the new roll-call of names and texts (p. 212). Dangerously, what to some may appear as a countercanon 'ghetto' may also start to feel like a cozy place to be, with the rather unpleasant result of a perpetuation of forms of cultural separation. In a related remark, Stuart Curran admits to his practical difficulties in integrating women's verse into the syllabuses for his courses. Specifically addressing Romantic-period studies, he is concerned that, although the agenda of rediscovery has definitely changed the appearance of this cultural period, 'it is remarkable how little

affected has been the gallery of familiar, almost familial, portraits' hanging on the walls of our virtual Romantic halls of fame (p. 145). Besides this series of warnings, the present collection of essays also indicates possible solutions. The caveat sounded by Elizabeth Eger's paper that it has all been done before and that we may gain from learning from the past is therefore indicative of the intentions animating this book. It gathers together what has already been done, what Doody calls the 'spade-work' carried out by pioneering scholars (p. 3). It also seeks to expand this work into new directions, with the awareness of the need to redesign the idea of a canon, a concept which the volume boldly carries as part of its subtitle. This double aim is particularly relevant as it fits in with current perceptions that the rush to interpret texts and create a new canon needs to be tempered by a heightened awareness of the consequences of canon-making and the canonization of new saints and holy books. The volume traces (and supports) the making of a canon of women's verse in accordance with the feminist project of recuperation and rediscovery but it also rings the feminist bell of critique to warn us against canonizing and exclusive canons. On the one hand, this is a stimulating collection of essays containing interesting readings of individual texts, re-evaluations of an author's output or the charting of recurrent themes in the female tradition. On the other, and on the more theoretical, more widely applicable level, the book, together with its companion volume for Victorian and early twentieth-century verse, is a rich and diversified reminder that the reconstruction of a female poetical canon is neither an easy task nor an even remotely-accomplished one.

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Betty T. Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*. Baltimore & London: John Hopkins UP, 1998. Pp. 177. hb £31-50, pb £11-50. ISBN 0 8018 5976 X, 0 8018 5975 1.

This book is an expanded version of the Introduction Bennett wrote for *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* published by Pickering and Chatto in 1996. Bennett has been at the heart of recent Mary Shelley scholarship, and there can be few people better qualified to summarise the research, editing and theorizing that has gradually begun to reveal the full significance of the literary life (as both writer and editor) of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Unlike Johanna M. Smith's recent revisiting of Shelley for the Twayne English Authors series (1996), Bennett uses a chronological framework for her four chapters. Smith approached her subject through a discussion of the literary genres in which Shelley worked, and her Introduction questioned the helpfulness of biography to the critic; it was refreshing to be offered an alternative approach, but arguably the biographical context remains an inextricable adjunct to Shelley's writing. Shelley was born into a family that made the political life of the nation very much its own business, and Bennett emphasizes early on the importance of the way Shelley made connections between the power struggles going on within the Nation, and the ordering of domestic matters:

She believed that the sociopolitical iniquities of the larger society were mirrored within the family and the individual. She delineated this thesis by invariably coalescing the private and the public. (p. 3)

This leads her on to a spirited rejection of the traditional view that, with the exception of *Frankenstein* (and more recently *The Last Man*), Shelley was a novelist primarily concerned with marketability:

... all of Mary Shelley's major works voice a cosmopolitan, sociopolitical reformist ideology that evolved as their author's acute awareness of world events enabled her to calibrate her literary voice to deal with unfolding rather than past societal issues. (p. 4)

In the limited space at her disposal, Bennett proceeds to make a convincing case for the way in which the novels, along with much of her other published work, develop a political agenda. We are frequently reminded that this is not how the novels were first read; or at least, it is certainly not on this basis that they were first reviewed (exactly how they were read must remain impossible to know). The fact that women authors were not expected to write about politics resulted in the sidelining of these novels as 'minor' in subsequent critical assessments, and this has continued to be the situation through to our own time. Though Bennett is prepared to identify an autobiographical, roman B clef tendency in Shelley's work, she argues (like Smith before her) that this is an unproductive critical road to travel, because experience has shown that it can distort the study of Shelley's serious political purposes. What must be avoided at all costs is the stereotypical 'assumption that a female writer must personally experience a subject to write about it.' (p. 51) Readers of the Chatto and Pickering Selected Works will no doubt find themselves with a wide range of questions that now need to be asked of Shelley's output as it appears there. With respect to the political issues that Shelley explores, Bennett's book is an important introduction, showing how the author moved with the rapidly changing political and social environment in which she wrote; in this respect the novels are presented as a revealing sequence: *Frankenstein*, *Castruccio*, *Perkin Warbeck* and *Falkner* are related characters designed to address a living debate that is going on as British society evolves through a volatile post war era, and Shelley's analysis of the issues at the heart of a 'post Romantic' society is sharp and perceptive, always sensitive to the interplay between the personal and the public arena: 'As in *Lodore*, the personal tribulations in *Falkner* are played out in an environment of societal power, exemplified by the class system as well as by the legal system. The privileges of wealth and class are made obvious'. (p. 101) But there will, inevitably, be other questions, questions that Bennett could not be expected to address given the length of the book (fifty-six of its 177 pages are taken up with notes, bibliography, index and a chronology). A major preoccupation for Shelley after her husband's death was the task of establishing Percy as a major poet and thinker; her work as editor inevitably had far reaching effects on her other writing, as did her tendency to write from her immediate experience of the Byron and Shelley set -- the dreaded roman B clef habit. Shelley played a major part through her fiction, and eventually through her publishing of Percy Shelley's poetry and prose, in establishing the myth of the Romantic poet for the delectation of future literary historians and critics; and while all this is going on an even more contentious question arises. Given all we do now know about her, and given our access now to the full range of her writing and editorial achievements, just how accomplished a writer does she finally appear to be? Bennett's book comes as an invaluable aid at this point in the reevaluation of Mary Shelley, but there is still much work to do.

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Anya Taylor. *Bacchus in Romantic England: Writers and Drink, 1780-1830*. *Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories*. Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1998. Pp. 264 pp. illus. hb £47.50. ISBN 0 333 72521 2.

Perhaps because most of us have never tried it, we tend to overlook the fact that laudanum contains not only raw opium but a good deal of liquor besides -- which is to say that Coleridge and DeQuincey were, with all due respect, as often drunk as they were stoned. And then, of course, plenty of their friends preferred their spirits straight. Such is not the argument of this unique and occasionally disturbing book, but it is the premise: that a scholarly fixation with Romantic narcotics, stimulated no doubt by the Romantics themselves, has blinded us to a practice that was both an important topic of debate at the time and a significant trope in the period's literature. This book covers all aspects of contemporary discourse on the subject, delivering both historical analysis and close textual readings in a lucid, easy style. The argument is that, so far from being a fallow period between the big binges of eighteenth-century gin lovers on the one hand and of drunken Victorian labourers on the other, Romantic period England nurtured 'a rich culture of drinking', one that managed to preserve in delicate balance both its creative (Bacchanalian) and destructive (Apollonian) tendencies. Anya Taylor makes that case by drawing on recent empirical research by medical historians like Roy Porter and on new psychological studies of alcoholism and addiction, particularly in family situations. This is a valuable interdisciplinary achievement in its own right; taken together with the many de-familiarized literary figures that reel through these pages--Lamb and Coleridge carousing over after-dinner drinks, to take one memorable and oddly disquieting example--Taylor's book offers a fresh and highly informed perspective on a distinct cultural phenomenon that was, and for that matter still is, a vexed moral problem. The book opens with medical writing on the subject, new in the period. From antiquity to the eighteenth century the ambiguity of the Dionysian mythos, purveyor both of inspiration and misery, was celebrated and reviled accordingly, but only by the turn of the century was it subjected to the medical gaze, which saw it as a disease. Thomas Trotter, Anthony Fothergill, also Erasmus Darwin and Thomas Beddoes--all tended to treat drunkenness as a condition that demands interference in order to control it; while social commentators like Patrick Colquhoun, Francis Place and Basil Montagu argued for tighter governmental control. The point is, in Romantic period England drinkers were no longer naive as in ages past, to borrow Schiller's distinction, but sentimental, self-conscious tipplers who knew very well what they were getting into and how hard it would be to get out. Such self-conscious regard haunts the figures in the chapters that follow but as Taylor explains each reacts in a different way. Wordsworth gets drunk in Milton's rooms at Cambridge and then repents, but he continues to regard with fascination, and with some tolerance, the inspired but fatal drunkenness of Burns (commemorated in 'Benjamin the Waggoner'). Lamb, his coherent sense of identity crushed by Humean scepticism, makes for himself alternative identities, each eased into place with the help of a drink or two; but Elia can't admit addiction and instead drives his anxiety, desperately but interestingly, deep into the texture of his prose. Wet as ever, Coleridge the moralist knows his sin and freely admits its debilitating effects, his moving expressions of acute remorse ('Suicide--rather than this!') and his surprisingly ribald drinking songs ('Come damn it, Girls, don't let's be sad / The bottle stands so handy') the divided issue of his divided self. These portraits combine fresh historical research with good textual analysis, but the most inventive handling of Romantic drinking comes in the final three chapters--on Hartley Coleridge, Keats, and women novelists -- where unthought of consequences are brought to the fore. Trapped by his father's resolve that he must 'wander like a breeze', Hartley grows up to fulfil his father's worst fears and he spends his life alone, unsettled and often intoxicated. Taylor carefully explores his maudlin, derivative verse, to show how the apotheosis of

the Romantic will is shadowed by the fear of determinism, the fear of its own nothingness. Keats's indulgence is a very different thing. More often a trope than a practice, his drunkenness is part of the 'Life of Sensations' that he seeks to rescue from Milton's Puritanism, but if he redeems fermentation (cherishing, in Taylor's nice phrase, 'wine's transitory power to glow more brightly in the moment of dissolution') he ultimately, if reluctantly, rejects its pleasures as illusory. With barely suppressed rage, that, too, is the conclusion of women novelists like Mary Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth, whose several female protagonists in *Maria* and *Belinda* suffer at the hands of drunken husbands. Their complaints give voice to Romanticism's underclass. There is much else besides, from a discussion of masculine sociability to an analysis of Lamb's forgotten tragedy, *John Woodvil*, as well as eight intriguing illustrations. I can think of only one notorious Romantic drinker not in these pages, Southey's friend William Taylor of Norwich (surely not a relation of the author?). As a whole, the period does manage to preserve that 'vivacious balance' between 'the pleasures and the pains of drinking', though no single figure, except perhaps Keats, manages to do it in his own person. The plentiful instances offered here deepen our historical understanding of Romantic medicine and of an important and neglected strand in Romantic lyricism. There seems to be a moral judgement, too, that's never actually spelled out but still hard to avoid: for all Dionysus's promised pleasures, the pain far outweighed the gain.

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Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Pp. x + 285. hb £33. ISBN 0 8018 5696 5.

This book is a wide-ranging and ambitious attempt to bring together empirical trends in eighteenth-century and Romantic studies with more familiar, evaluative modes of study. Siskin refers repeatedly to the current transformation of our modes of reading and writing by the new technologies of E-mail and the Worldwide Web, and one problematic the book seems implicitly to be engaging is the question of what might happen to our present model of literary study, based as it is on the close reading of a limited range of canonical texts, in the face of the proliferation of neglected texts made available to us by new technologies of reproduction. Siskin cites (p 226) a conference intervention by David Simpson, in which this sense of being overwhelmed by a wealth of new historical material is dubbed 'the anthological sublime', an experience of dread which will be familiar to anybody who has ever tried to grapple with the masses of unknown Romantic period novels contained in the microfiches of the Corvey collection at Sheffield Hallam University. Siskin's strategy, in the face of this technological problematic, is to recover the history, in the 'long eighteenth century', of writing itself as a new technology, and to examine how our present sense of 'comfort' with the experience of reading and writing, to the extent of forgetting its technological determination, was brought about. Siskin suggests that the remedy for the typically Augustan panic at the 'proliferation of writing' (of which he interprets concern about the moral effects of novels on their female readership as a symptom) lay in the development of professionalism and 'disciplinarity' towards the end of the eighteenth century. The disciplinary claim to combine narrowness of focus with 'depth' of treatment paradoxically at once encourages the proliferation of writing and makes it manageable, according to Siskin, since it provides a moral justification for that proliferation: within the narrow professional field, writerly productivity becomes

a matter of duty, of 'doing one's job' (a point Siskin supports through a reading of Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' as a parable of professional activity). Siskin argues that the 'psychologization' of writing represented by the emergence of professionalism led to the emergence in the early nineteenth century of the category of Literature (in its modern sense of 'imaginative literature'). Literature, for Siskin, possesses an ambiguous, liminal status in relationship to professionalism: Siskin cites at various points a comment made by J S Mill in an inaugural lecture, 'Men are men before they are lawyers' (p 7), a comment which he interprets as evidence of the double role of Literature, at once a profession in itself and a humanistic preparation for professional specialization. It is this double positioning, within and outside the incipient structures of professionalism, that seems to unite the literary texts discussed by Siskin. Great emphasis is laid on Wordsworth's description of the Lyrical Ballads as 'experiments', a word that for Siskin captures the professional ambiguity of Literature, implying general human 'experience' as well as the specialized scientific sense of 'controlled trial'. Siskin sketches a history of eighteenth-century poetry in terms of the genre of Georgic rather than the more usual Pastoral: within Siskin's argument, what is important about Georgic is its double relationship to the world of work, as a description of work from a position seemingly outside it, which also functions, like the discourse of political economy itself, as a prescriptive account of how work is to be done. He emphasizes the general embeddedness of lyric poetry in critical discourse about poetry (in the form of prefaces, notes, other poems etc) in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in a way that seems intended to exemplify the ambiguous professional status of Literature: the lyric poet as not only a professional practitioner of lyricism, but also a general educator in its appreciation. This attention to the embeddedness of what we now class as Literature within 'non-literary' discourse also informs Siskin's account of what he terms 'novelism', by which he means the interrelationship between eighteenth-century fiction and periodical writing. Siskin concludes the book by an examination of Austen's literary career in which he argues that Austen's paradoxical position as the only woman writer of her time not to be excluded from the canon that was then in the process of formation reflects her own decision not to publish fiction in periodicals. This decision, Siskin suggests, by distancing her work from the increasingly polemical interchange between readers and writers characteristic of periodicals from the 1790s onwards, enables her early reviewers to react to her novels as 'safe'; in a gesture that Siskin intimates is paradigmatic of the newly professionalized sphere of Literature, Austen's novels become characterized as 'narrow but deep'. This summary of the book's argument does not really do justice to the breadth of Siskin's concerns, which also include the interrelationship between print culture and the rise of nationalism. The very boldness of Siskin's attempt at synthesis, however, gives rise to some problems: much of the argument appears somewhat diffuse, and there are some unexplained connections. One example is when Siskin explains the lessening of interest in the category of the sublime in the early nineteenth century as a consequence of the emergence of the concept of 'culture' (pp 71-72), without going into any detail about how this happens or whose concept of 'culture' he is talking about (there are some references to Herder, but since Siskin has limited the scope of his book to Britain, these don't seem to establish his point). Although Siskin bills this book as an exercise in 'dedisciplinarity', an attempt to escape disciplinary horizons, a number of its features seem to situate it all too clearly within a specific disciplinary context, in ways which detract from the effectiveness of its thesis. Partly, this is to do with its mode of argumentation: often, particular quotations are made to bear a very considerable weight of exposition, with

little attempt made to justify the representative quality which Siskin is attributing to them (examples of this are the Mill quote already referred to, and Hume's comment at the end of the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding about the 'havoc' which application of his philosophical criteria for knowledge would wreak if applied to libraries, to which Siskin repeatedly refers early on in the book). This is a way of arguing which might well be appropriate to analysis of a single author, or a close-knit group of authors, but which fails to convince when applied to a topic of such wide-ranging sociological import as the development of literary professionalism. Another feature of the book which undermines Siskin's attempt to escape disciplinary boundaries is the manner in which literary questions and literary texts are continually foregrounded in the argument. For Siskin, the topic in hand is always 'Literature and... something else', a focus of interest that seems to prevent him from appreciating the connections between some of the topics he discusses. This not only makes the book rather episodic in character (perhaps reflecting its origins in a series of papers), but actively works against the argument he is presenting. For example, Siskin's very acute observation that in early nineteenth-century Britain the new discursive formation of 'English Literature' takes over from enlightenment Scottish philosophy as the guarantor of mental 'health' and intellectual common ground (p 94), would surely only have been strengthened by some discussion of the influence of Scottish philosophy on the founders of the Edinburgh Review, whose professionalization of the periodical Siskin discusses elsewhere in the book. Likewise, Siskin alludes frequently to Hume, and discusses the Scottish Enlightenment at some length, without ever noting that Hume's Scottish Enlightenment critics focus their attacks on qualities of Hume's writing, and on his pose as an 'amateur' philosopher, in ways that seem directly relevant to Siskin's argument about the professionalization of writing towards the end of the eighteenth century.

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Andrew Lincoln, *Spiritual History: A Reading of William Blake's Vala, or The Four Zoas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Pp. xiv + 322 hb £40. ISBN 0 19 818314 3.  
Helen P. Bruder, *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*. Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1997, Pp. xi + 291. hb £47.50 (\$59.95). ISBN 0 333 64036 5, 0 312 17481 0.

If William Blake's epic books *Milton* (1804) and *Jerusalem* (1820) remain seriously underread, the situation with the unfinished manuscript epic *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (abandoned in the late 1790s) is more serious still. 'Who reads *The Four Zoas*?' Lincoln asks in his Preface. His answer is that the poem's audience is probably few, even if fit: and the aim of his study is therefore to serve as a spur and 'guide' through the extraordinary textual complexities of the piece for both new and for established readers of Blake. Readers of the poem are indebted to Lincoln for the care and the clarity with which he maps the often discontinuous 'layers' of the text in an extremely detailed account of its narrative shape and transformation. At the same time, though, the book straddles rather uneasily its twin imperatives of being a 'guide' and of presenting an argument about Blakean 'history.' The study is divided into three main movements: an outline of the early 'copperplate' text, then of the body of the poem in its major phases, then of the later revisions and additions to the text in which a Christianizing frame is introduced to the narrative. Throughout, Lincoln's focus is on 'thematic relationships' between the poem's elements, rather than on the history of its composition or on the conceptual and interpretative problems raised by the poem's

status as epic fragment or palimpsest. Indeed, the remarkably rifted nature of the text means that Lincoln's attempt to hold his themes together is often disrupted by the turbulent textuality of the poem itself: and this draws into rather sharp relief the tension in the study between traditional thematic criticism on the one hand and the much more hazardous enterprise of accounting for *Vala*, or *The Four Zoas* as a tortured text-in-process on the other. Lincoln describes his own focus as the poem's 'cultural vision and context'. That focus involves putting the poem in dialogue with the various models of cultural 'history' that Blake both inherits and whose history he seeks to mediate and 'narrativize' in his text. This aspect of Lincoln's study is informative and instructive. Very broadly, Lincoln sees Blake's narrative and its agents as dramatizing and diagnosing in their relationships various crises of historical 'narrativisation' in the Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment periods. Thus the struggle between 'Urizen' and 'Ahaniah' relatively early in the text is presented as, among other things, a conflict between 'providential' and 'mechanistic' models of history: a rift by way of which Blake anatomises the competing paradigms of historical meaning in post-Renaissance and Enlightenment culture. Other terms marshalled in the study for this same struggle are the difference between Biblical and Enlightenment, lapsarian and progressivist, mythical and secular, or Christian and mechanistic accounts of history. Blake, however, is not presented as the straightforward mouthpiece of either one or other of these paradigms: rather, he is seen as the interrogator of their ideological meanings. Thus, while Blake's narrative is seen as participating in the eighteenth-century tradition of 'philosophical history,' its intervention in that history involves the revelation that notions of history work repeatedly to justify forms of social order. A good deal of the discussion is devoted to invoking various Enlightenment and contemporary intertexts (Hume, Smith, Rousseau, Gibbon, among others) whose models of cultural history Blake's is considered to echo, parallel or in some cases 'narrativise'. Where the study could say much more, however, is on the precise relationship between Blake's text and these other paradigms. Too often such relationships are described simply in terms of 'resemblance' or analogy, rather than any more dynamic or strenuous interplay between differing models being presented. The main object of the study is to articulate the models of historical narration constructed across Blake's poem, but Lincoln's book remains strangely untouched by the force of the new historicist reflection on the play between language and history in Romantic texts; and certainly the study would have benefitted from an engagement with such positions. Lincoln argues that there is 'little reason' to suppose that the pace of Blake's revisions to the poem present an 'attempt to keep up with the rapidly changing events of contemporary history.' This is no doubt a swipe at Erdman's reading of the *Zoas*, but Lincoln's study, despite the fact that the word 'history' presides over it, never really offers any sense of history's impingement as 'event' on Blake's text. Paradoxically, perhaps a more theoretically engaged language (rather than one drawing on Erdman's empirical historicism) would have enabled such a sense to be registered; for it can undoubtedly be argued that 'history' in Blake's texts functions as a traumatic event that exceeds at the same time as it renders necessary its own 'narrativisation'.

Helen Bruder's provocative, readable, significant book is an enlivening feminist-historicist study of Blake's early illuminated texts from 1789-1794 (leaving aside the *Songs*), and presents itself as a 'recontextualisation' of these works in the light of the failure of mainstream Blake criticism to acknowledge the ways in which Blake's writings are enmeshed in the sexual and gendered debates of his day. Her aim is to put

Blake's texts back into these debates -- around female conduct, female desire and female power -- while also pointing to the way the Blake establishment has marginalized the sexually radical Blake by appropriating him for a dehistoricized, liberal, and decidedly patriarchal ideology. As well as liberal establishment critics, Blake's radical left-wing and feminist readers are castigated in a programmatic opening chapter that charges the second group with marginalizing Blakean sexual politics, and the third with lacking sufficient feminist and historical commitment. Subsequent chapters visit a series of textual and contextual sites -- the Blakean reference points are *The Book of Thel*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America and Europe* -- in order to demonstrate the contemporaneity of Blake's writings to, and radical engagement with, the sexual dialogues of the period. The tone of the discussion is combative throughout, but this goes along with a frequently generous intellectual attitude to writers whose work Bruder in other ways lambasts. Some members of the Blakean 'male intellectual establishment' will certainly be bruised by this book. Indeed, Nelson Hilton, a critic not infrequently attacked in *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*, produced a carping review of the volume in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* in 1998 in which, nervously defensive, he was patronising about the book's ideological commitments and pedantic about its contextual specificities. Clearly, Bruder's work exposes nerves. As a critic whose own work on Blake has been both summarily dismissed and generously praised by Bruder, my sense is that what Blake called 'Intellectual War' matters, that in Blake intellectual wounds are politically transformative, and that Bruder's study is written in the spirit of the troubled dialogues that she energetically charts across Blake's writings. For the most part, Bakhtin's work is Bruder's presiding theoretical spirit. Thus she argues for a feminist appropriation of Bakhtin in order to think about the sociality and historicity of Blake's language. Much of the book is an attempt to restore to the study of Blake the 'many voices of the great sexual dialogue that [he] was part of,' and this involves rejecting the idea that there was any 'monolithically sexist social context' for Blake's work and arguing, on the contrary, that gender was in revolution both in this period and in Blake's texts themselves. Dialogism is the rule. Some of the strongest parts of the book, indeed, are when Bruder presents Blakean figures as being grasped by specific historical dilemmas, contradictions and impasses in which incipient feminist possibilities are simultaneously broached and balked, and in which unresolved discursive contests are acted out. Thus Thel in *The Book of Thel* finds herself in a position of 'historical deadlock' in which her female potential to 'act' is erased by the poem's patriarchal apologists, who offer an education in self-effacement that Bruder relates to the late eighteenth-century context of female conduct books. Similarly, Oothoon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* finds herself caught between contradictory constructions of female sexuality as both passive and voracious; furthermore, Oothoon's affirmation of her own desire is sabotaged by the contemporary equation of female sexual assertion with whoredom, an equation that Bruder shows was sustained by the eighteenth century's flourishing pornographic literature. While the book is strong on mapping the sexual dialogics enacted across Blake's texts, and strong on contextualizing Blake's work within contemporary debates on gender, there is a curiously monologic yearning in Bruder's study to discover what 'Blake's attitude' was to the various sexual questions that he dramatised. Yet this discovery becomes harder as it goes on, for by the time Bruder gets to *Europe* she is confronted by a deeply problematic texture of historical and figural contradiction that, by her own admission, resists resolution into the monologism of any Blakean 'attitude.' And such difficulties would no doubt be

compounded by an encounter (missed in this book) with the later, mythological, epic Blake. This encounter is, perhaps, to come. Bruder's lament at the difficulty of deriving Blake's 'views' or 'allegiances' from his ever more embattled and dialogic texts derives from her wish to enlist Blake as a 'proto-feminist.' Yet the ideological praise and blame liberally dispensed in this study (not infrequently to Blake's contemporaries) is often at odds with its vaunted historicism, for the book's historicist explanations are discontinuous with its ideological censures. But if in this book Blake's texts are allowed to be less troublingly dialogic than is the general late eighteenth-century text of which they are a part, Bruder remains persuasive in contextualizing the sexual politics of Blake's writing. Moreover, at the level of critical ideology, the study is an important demonstration that there is a politics of Blakean scholarship.

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Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Pp. 346. hb £25. ISBN 0 19 811965 8.

One of the most important features of Stephen Gill's rightly acclaimed *William Wordsworth. A Life* (1989) is the attention it pays to Wordsworth's later years. It corrects the lop-sided orthodoxy that effectively ends the poet's career, to all creative intents and purposes, in 1815, and reattaches the decades of elderly conservatism to those of youthful radicalism -- uncomfortable as that may be. Part of this rectification is the reestablishment of Wordsworth as a public figure, as Britain's revered elder bard in the opening years of Victoria's reign. This is the starting point for Gill's richly revealing study of how the second half of the nineteenth century constructed 'Wordsworth' -- at once the man and the body of works. The relationship between the two was symbiotic, for both were held to be exemplary, mutually supportive in their high-mindedness: it was Mrs Humphry Ward, in a letter of 1891, who commented with evident relief that, unlike the racketsy Byron or irreligious Shelley, here at least was 'a respectable genius'. That respectability rested, of course, on various biographical evasions: most obviously the relationship with Annette Vallon and the illegitimate child she bore; less directly, but more unnervingly, the relationship with Dorothy revealed by her *Journal*. As *Wordsworth and the Victorians* shows, the first was deliberately suppressed by the poet's family for the official *Memoirs* of 1851, and even though the details were put together by William Knight when researching his great biography of 1889 -- a process Gill deftly reconstructs -- he felt unable to publish them. Knight also tumbled to something not quite right in how brother and sister got on at Grasmere, but careful filleting of material he drew from Dorothy's *Journal* allowed such disquieting matter to remain tactfully hidden. Such tinkering with 'the truth' -- whatever that might mean - has often been the occasion of smug denunciation in the twentieth century. Gill wholly avoids this, demonstrating instead the way in which biographical elisions, which included playing down young William's revolutionary politics, were consonant with the project of aligning the life with the Victorians' perception of the works -- or perhaps 'The Work', for Wordsworth himself endlessly adjusted, annotated, smoothed and reordered so as to recreate the whole corpus of his poetry as a single, coherent fabric. The Wordsworth who was contradictory, disjunctive, radically uneasy, is very much a twentieth-century construction, and suits our needs as the nineteenth century's version suited theirs. For the Victorians the key work was *The Excursion*, supplemented by *The Prelude* only after Wordsworth's death, and then only in its massively re-engineered fourteen-book

form. Even so, as Gill records, Macaulay found the poem 'to the last degree Jacobinical, indeed, Socialist'. One wonders what he would have made of the 1805 Prelude or, even more, Salisbury Plain. Until the end of the century, the ideological management of the published works, let alone access to manuscript sources, was closely bound to the copyright held by Wordsworth's family and his publisher, Moxon: not the least of Gill's achievements is to ground issues of ideological construction in the profits and practicalities of book-trade economics. What emerged from the process was a body of teaching on the democracy of the human heart under the aegis of an undogmatic divinity, read in the forms of a Lakeland landscape at once eternal and everyday, where individual identity was secured by a communal concourse of past and present. As Wordsworth and the Victorians emphatically demonstrates, the synthesis was potent and creative. Widely disseminated through the illustrated anthologies and collected editions that dodged their way round copyright restriction, Wordsworth's philosophy -- as it was perceived -- inflected religious thinking from High Church autocrats like Keble to honest doubters like William Hale White, helped shape the fictions of Gaskell and George Eliot, was anxiously negotiated by Tennyson, rearranged by Arnold, and eventually, with the Wordsworth Society showing the way, became a key inspiration for the founding of the National Trust and the securing of the Lake District as a resource for all of us. Gill's arguments open up a range of issues for future investigation. Among them: the role played by Wordsworth's construction in the invention of the Victorian countryside and English ruralism; the way in which Wordsworth's elevation as national teacher shaped the cultural status of poetry; Ruskin's indebtedness to Wordsworth, not only generally but specifically in his assertion of a semantic, an ethical semiotic, inherent to the natural world. As will be clear, Wordsworth and the Victorians is much more than a literary history. It is a major study of the way in which the Victorians responded to and remade a central part of their Romantic inheritance. And of how that inheritance reciprocally constructed the imagination, the very consciousness, of Victorian men and women.

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Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: a Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. ix + 314. hb £37.50 (\$59.95), pb £13.99 ISBN 0 521 39582 8, 0 521 39545 3.

The aim of this anthology of writings on aesthetics is plainly stated at the outset: 'to de-couple the British eighteenth-century tradition of the sublime from the Kantian analytic'(p. 3). The benefits of breaking with the teleology established so influentially in Samuel Monk's *The Sublime* (1935) can be instantly appreciated by a glance at the table of contents. Alongside the familiar names of Addison, Dennis, Baillie, Duff, and the indispensable Burke, there is a wonderful array of unfamiliar contenders striving to define the indefinable: Tamworth Reresby, Thomas Stackhouse, Henry Needler, William Marshall, to mention a few. The selections are rich, and imaginatively made, subtly restoring the term 'sublime' to historical context, and indicating its migration into unexpected discursive territories. It was an excellent idea to include some meaty extracts from William Smith's 1743 translation of Longinus' seminal text *On the Sublime*, and Samuel Johnson's extensive dictionary definition. More unorthodox are the substantial passages from texts not automatically associated with aesthetics. There is a section devoted to the Scottish philosophers, which includes Adam Smith on moral sentiments and Adam Ferguson on civil society as well as the literary critic

Hugh Blair; indeed, Smith receives as much space as Burke. The final section moves from 'the Picturesque to the Political', representing works by the political radicals William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams, as well as Burke in his reactionary incarnation. The editors' comments offer only the slightest of explanations for these stimulating detours. Peter de Bolla's *The Discourse of the Sublime* (Blackwell, 1989) is an essential supplement. It should be mentioned, however, that his investigation of gender in that work is not reflected here. The collection is designed for eighteenth-century and theory specialists with a sense of adventure, rather than for students. It makes few concessions to the tyro. There is no information given about the provenance of the texts or the biographies of the authors beyond bare dates and bibliographical details. Nor are there any translations of Greek and Latin quotes, identifications of the source of quotations, or explanatory notes, beyond those present in the originals. These are quite serious lacks. There is however a useful list of further reading given for many of the selected works. If the Reader is used for teaching, it would require a good deal of fleshing out. All but the most intellectually robust undergraduates would need to be steered away from the short introductions heading each section, which for the most part are thoroughly mystifying. I use the terms advisedly. The headnotes do show scholarly thoroughness and depth of knowledge, and impress with a sense of mental rigour. But the discussions are also frustratingly elliptical, partly due to the terminology which lends ideas a mysterious physical presence, constantly forming clusters or emitting 'outworkings'. Sometimes the problem is a simple matter of red herrings. Part Four is titled 'The Aberdonian Enlightenment' but there is no real clue as to what makes the concerns of the texts exclusive to Aberdeen. Without a more substantial account of the philosophical background, stray proposals that the concept of genius or issues of the 'connection between ethics and power' were somehow the property of the city's thinkers will either be unpersuasive, or downright misleading. The previous section, 'Irish Perspectives', to which Burke's *Enquiry* is unhappily confined, is even more peculiar. Instead of trying to elucidate precisely what aspect of Irishness links Burke to the obscure John Lawson and James Usher, the editors (understandably) plunge into a quite unrelated, dense but suggestive meditation on general questions of subjectivity, the standards of judgement, and the prominence of the passions in enlightenment models of consciousness. For all their resistance to the Kantian narrative, the editors could be accused of succumbing to one or two dehistoricizing trajectories themselves. A number of remarks in the commentary reveal a temptation to jump out of the Transcendental frying-pan into the Freudian fire. But the material they have revealed is too vital, unruly, and contradictory, to allow any ready assimilation. Ashfield and de Bolla have performed a great service in producing this challenging reader. It is guaranteed to unsettle received wisdom on aesthetic theory of the period, and will send debate on the concept of the sublime in new directions.

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Stephen Bygrave, *Romantic Writings. Approaching Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. x + 352. hb £45, pb £12.99. ISBN 0 415 13577 X, 0 415 13578 8.

Prepared as part of an Open University course, this book will be valuable for all undergraduate students. It will also be useful for tutors interested in the ways Romantic studies can be taught, and may provide some new ideas and material for their own tutorials. Stephen Bygrave, as editor, had the unenviable task of selecting

Romantic writing and criticism that suitably represented the diversity of literature that exists. He sets out his aim from the first page of the introduction: to approach literature of the period through its historical context. The fallacy that the Romantic period offers a homogenous collection of writing of a similar nature is attacked but the volume still leaves the student confident that 'Romanticism' is a meaningful term. The book is divided into two sections. The first is a series of essays by Bygrave and contributing authors on various aspects of Romanticism: 1. Bygrave, 'Romantic Poems and Contexts', 2. Bygrave, 'Versions of British Romantic Writing', 3. Graham Allen, 'Defences of Poetry', 4. Susan Matthews, 'Woman Writers and Readers', 5. Bygrave, 'Reading The Prelude', 6. Allen, 'Romantic Verse Narrative', 7. Bygrave, 'Reading Byron', 8. Amanda Gilroy, 'Women Poets 1780-1830', 9. Allen, 'Romantic Allegory', 10. Nigel Leask, 'Colonialism and the exotic', Richard Allen, 'Reading Kleist and Hoffman'. Part Two is made up of critical texts referred to in the previous essays: Stuart Curran, 'The I altered', Raymond Schwab, 'The oriental renaissance', Sigmund Freud, 'The uncanny', René Wellek, 'The concept of Romanticism in literary history', and Byron's *The Corsair*. In the first section, the reading of the text being discussed is directed by a question. The 'Discussion' (never offered as the 'answer') comes after this. If the student uses this book in the way it is intended, attempting first to answer the questions put to them on their own, then reading the author's argument and re-reading the text in this light, they will emerge with a number of practical skills, which they could use in all literary studies. They are also given specific historical, composition and publication information pertinent to the text. The individual essays point them towards the major themes and 'issues' of Romantic studies and the questions attend to both local detail and broader conceptual ideas. Information can be easily absorbed, encouraged by presentation and formatting: the page is split into blocks of text, which are then often divided into single points, questions and lists. In this way the book lends itself to note-taking and reference. Although the language and intellectual demand on the reader become more difficult as you read on, the book remains approachable due to its written style. Bygrave is perhaps best at achieving this with an informal and accessible voice, which would I think appeal to students. He writes in the first person giving a reassuring sense of the teacher behind the text. The choices and selections made in the book must have been difficult for him but each decision is accompanied by an attempt to justify a text's and essay's inclusion. Chapters are aware of their relationship to each other and to the remit of the entire collection. The book is free of footnote and endnote references, and long lists of secondary critical reading. For the most part the reader need only read this book alongside the companion text, Duncan Wu's *Romanticism* (also published by Blackwells). In many cases this is enough, but, noticeably in the chapters on women writers, Wu's anthology is not the recommended text. Wu's *Romantic Woman Poets*, the companion anthology, was not then published and, presumably, no other single anthology was sufficient. Non-canonical Romantic texts are used and women Romantic poets, given two chapters, are addressed with especial emphasis. But traditional texts do dominate, with entire chapters on *The Prelude* and Byron. In other chapters the canonical male poets are much in evidence: in the chapter on narrative poems, the main subjects are Blake, Shelley and Keats, and Leask uses Shelley, Byron, Coleridge and De Quincey in the chapter on Orientalism. The book is not supposed to be read straight through from beginning to end; cross references send you to criticism in Part Two as well as back to earlier discussions on the same text. Partly because of this, the book does not seem an organic whole: chapters do not develop from those previous and the book can move abruptly. Despite the attempts to

standardize the separate entries, the volume does allow for different pedagogic methods particular to a contributor or their subject. Conversely, this means that a few essays deviate considerably from the general techniques and this might confuse the reader. Perhaps because of the intention to demonstrate the variety of texts gathered together under the banner of 'Romanticism', chapter titles are sometimes broad and vague. There is the potential for students to get lost among the diverse texts loosely grouped under headings such as 'Versions of British Romantic Writing'. The necessary limitation posed by the book's topic is at other times approached by a specificity that could be criticised for its selection. If both methods have faults, it is a good tactic to combine them for a single purpose.

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Andrew Ashfield, ed. *Romantic Women Poets, 1788-1848*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998. Pp. 299. pb £13.99. ISBN 0 7190 5293 9.

Andrew Ashfield's *Romantic Women Poets, 1788-1848, Vol. II*, is a complementary volume to his earlier (1995) anthology of women poets (see my previous review: *Bars Bulletin & Review*, No. 13, December 1997, pp. 19-21). In this second anthology, Ashfield has selected poems that relate to 'social issues' of the day as well as poems on the role of the woman poet in relation to the roles of other working women. In this volume, Ashfield includes poems on 'social issues' and poems on the role of the woman poet by the following twenty-three authors: Helen Maria Williams, Hannah More, Ann Yearsley, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Mary Leadbetter, Mary Robinson, Anne Bannerman, Fanny Holcroft, Jane Elizabeth Roscoe, Caroline Bowles, Felicia Hemans, Marianne Prowse, L. E. L., Catherine Grace Godwin, Mary Anne Browne, Maria Abdy, Caroline Norton, Caroline Clive, Anne, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Mary Bryan. He establishes 1788 as his starting-point for the period with a reprinting of three long rhetorical poems by Williams, More and Yearsley against the practice of slavery. These three poems emerged in response to William Wilberforce's introduction into Parliament of a Bill directed at the abolition of slavery. But these three poems are more of sociological interest than of aesthetic merit. Other poems in this volume that are of historical interest are those by Mary Leadbetter (1758-1826) on the Irish revolt of 1798. Although Leadbetter sets her poems in Ballitore, Co. Kildare, where she lived, this attempt at topicality does not discourage her from lapsing into a melodramatic end for her heroine: 'When sudden distemper assailed her worn frame,/And mid stifling waters poor Polly expired!' Moreover, Leadbetter's use of anapaestic tetrameters in rhyming quatrains gives her subject -- the aftermath of the trauma of the 1798 revolt in the village of Ballitore -- an incongruous note of jollity. Interestingly, Ashfield also reprints three narrative lyrics from *Lyrical Tales* (1800): 'The Lascar', 'Poor Marguerite' and 'Edmund's Wedding'. 'The Lascar', for example, represents experiences of the 'outcast' in English society, beginning with a monologue from the lascar himself, followed by a narrator's third-person description of the lascar's rejection by a middle-class, supposedly Christian community: 'With keen reproach, and menace rude,/The Lascar Boy away was sent;/...While the proud Pastor bent his way/To preach of Charity--and Pray!'. This note of satire, however, occurs seldom in this melodramatic tale. Robinson's satiric poems on political, economic and social evils, such as 'Stanzas' (1797) and 'The Birth-Day' (1806), make for more effective poetry than these somewhat derivative tales. In fact, Ashfield admits to the sentimentality of some of the poems that he has chosen for this anthology: 'Although it is certainly true that these concerns with

outcasts sometimes degenerated into sentimental sensationalism, as in the case of the youthful Fanny Holcroft's poems', the line from Cowper ... to Southey, as champion of victims, is still the line that many of the women poets responded to'. In 'The Negro' (1797), for example, Holcroft describes the negro's death in slavery:

The sufferer ceased, death chilled his veins; His mangled limbs grew stiff and cold;  
Yet whips nor racks inflict the pain Men feel who barter Man for Gold.

Perhaps Holcroft's enslavement to metre here prevents her expression of the complexity of attitudes in her day to slavery. Slavers who bartered 'Man for Gold' at that time should have felt the 'pain' of guilt, but contemporary prose accounts by Dissenters and others often imply that the greed of 'slavers' overcame any feelings of compunction they might have had and that they sometimes rationalized their greed with talk of 'empire' and so on. Anna Seward, for example, describes 'a Mr Newton' who believed that 'the purchase, employment, and strict discipline of the negroes were absolutely necessary to maintain our empire, and our commerce, in the Indies', and who could not be shaken from this belief. But women poets in the late eighteenth century, such as Fanny Holcroft, were more often concerned with a felicitous turn of phrase than with the expression of truths, sentimental or not. Ashfield's choice of poems on the theme of woman as poet have more aesthetic appeal, however, particularly when he chooses poems by the Brontës. Emily Brontë's 'Harp of Wild and Dreamlike Strain' (Wr. 1838), for example, develops a construction of herself as poet in which the all-encompassing power of memory is represented in a final impressive cosmic image:

Harp of wild and dream-like strain, When I touch thy strings, Why does thou repeat  
again Long-forgotten things? .... Yet, still steeped in memory's dyes, They come  
sailing on, Darkening all my summer skies, Shutting out my sun.

The poet represents the effects of memory on her mature writing in language that in itself inspires awe. In conclusion, Ashfield's anthology, similarly to his first one, provides an index of themes which should prove useful for readers, teachers, and students.

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Frances Wilson ed. *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Culture*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1998. Pp. 233. hb £42.50. ISBN 0 333 68383 8.

'Byromania': the title of this engaging collection of essays, not we are warned about Byron the poet, but about Byron the 'myth', is taken from Annabella Milbanke's description of the first wave of celebrity following the publication of *Childe Harold* in 1812. Despite proverbial wisdom, here, the cover tells us much. The Albanian Byron looks one way; the un-Byronic Hugh Grant (in frilly shirt!) looks the other. All of the essays included take their points of departure from the issues raised by these pictures. How did Byron seek to represent himself? And how has he subsequently been represented? Some of the essays are concerned with Byron as poseur, and ways in which those poses were interpreted by his contemporaries. Peter W. Graham argues that for 'Byron ... every social being is an actor -- and simultaneously, everyone is a spectator.' This, he suggests, complicates any simple reading of the poetry as in any sense autobiography. Similarly, Christine Keynon Jones demonstrates that in actual

portraits -- not all those discussed included in the accompanying illustrations -- the apparently unconcerned sitter masked an active interest in self-imaging. Here, what seems a detour into Byron's eating habits sheds new light on the affect on Byron of achieving the 'Byronic look'. What these two essays have in common, a characteristic shared with James Solderholm on Byronic confession, is an implicit admission of Byron's almost vampire-like control over this process (see Tom Holland's witty piece 'Undead Byron'): the poems and portraits can still be read to reveal the author's intentions, however sophisticated. Arguably more convincing is Ghislaine McDayter's chapter on the 'commodification' of Byron. Using a tentative Marxian methodology, she argues that Byron benefitted from 'the industrialization of Romanticism', without which 'Byromania' would not have been possible; and, further, that he lost control of his product. Echoing Mary Shelley, she paints a Byron deeply aware that the 'Byronic had come to take precedence over Byron, the creation over the creator'. Byron becomes then not the actor playing a part over which he has at least some control, but superfluous 'facsimile of himself'. The only qualm one might have is that this tends to ignore a Byron who may have enjoyed aspects of his commodification. It is this very commodification which concerns the remainder of the essays -- an examination of the process which ends with Hugh Grant as Byron. The best of these pieces is, perhaps, Andrew Elfenbein's on Byron in the now neglected 'silver fork' novels. Elfenbein argues persuasively that Disraeli and Catherine Gore used Byron as a way of differentiating between 'the inadequacy of Regency values' -- particularly a stress on the homosocial, part of Byron's legacy, rather absent from this collection -- and 'the supposedly better world of Victorian England'. In the case of Disraeli, whose own sense of Byronic imitation both in person and as a writer is well documented, the novels are seen as a way of exorcising the Byronic in favour of 'model Tory' values. Whilst this provides more evidence of the Victorian demonizing of Byron, and a fruitful area of study in a reconsideration of the 'silver fork' phenomenon, it does, perhaps, elide politics and literature too neatly. It suggests that Disraeli, and indeed, upstanding Victorians could simply wean themselves off their Byromania. This, in a different context, is a danger highlighted by the editor of the collection, Frances Wilson. She argues for a reconsideration of Caroline Lamb, and her contribution to 'Byromania', *Glenarvon*. She points out that, whichever side they are on, critics have tended to depoliticize and dehistoricize the relationship and the book; they have tended to produce a melodrama of their own based on the simplified demonic or romantic Byrons with which the Victorians grappled. In the remainder of the pieces here, including a useful bibliographic appendix, Byromania is similarly brought up to date. Two chapters by Ramona Ralston and Sidney Sondergard, and Peter Cochran explore his use and misuse in films. Werner Huber traces the identity complications apparent to Byron and his contemporaries to 'post-Modern' bio-plays which use Byron to explore the limits of subjectivity. And, finally, in a real tour de force, Roger Sales links Byron with the unlikely figure of Barbara Cartland (for whom 'the colour beige is just a vague rumour!'). This piece is great fun, but is let down, like those on more recent manifestations of Byromania, by a lack of focus. Is it enough that Cartland's heroes 'are like Byron in some respects, but totally unlike him in others'? To paraphrase Byron on himself, Byromania may not be 'a *mélange* of good and evil', but it is a mixture of the good and the provocative. It is to be recommended if it helps to prevent what one of the contributors calls 'the ghetto-isation of Byron studies'.

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Heidi Thomann Tewardson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen: The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998 Pp. 262 hb £42.75, pb £19. ISBN 0 8032 4435 5, 0-8032-9436-0.

Rahel Levin Varnhagen, born Rahel Levin in 1771, was the first child of a wealthy banking family whose head, Levin Markus, had already made the break with orthodox Judaism and found a limited acceptance in the upper echelons of Prussian society. To judge by the span of her life (she died in 1833) she should belong to the first generation of Romantics in Germany, and indeed she knew, or at least had met, many of the major figures in German literature of the time, including such prominent Romantics as Clemens Brentano, Tieck (who Tewardson bizarrely claims was responsible for 'bringing Shakespeare to Germany') and, towards the end of her life, the young Heinrich Heine. Her literary and intellectual allegiance, however, belonged rather to the Enlightenment and its project of rationality, human perfectibility and social amelioration. Rahel lived through some of the most turbulent and significant years in German history, the aftermath of 1789, the Napoleonic wars and French occupation, the liberation and the period of Reaction. For the last two decades of her life she was married to Karl Varnhagen von Ense, a career diplomat younger than herself whose prospects were not helped by his marriage to a forty-three year-old Jewess received into Protestant Christianity only days before the wedding ceremony in 1814, or by his 'unseasonable' democratic sympathies which were to blight his prospects totally after the clampdown on liberal thinking in the wake of Carlsbad Decrees. He later achieved prominence for his journalistic and political writings. After the marriage to Varnhagen Rahel briefly came closer to the centres of political influence and power but, this notwithstanding, to a biographer she offers unpromising material. Hers was a relatively constrained and uneventful life, and she has hitherto been regarded as a marginal figure in literary history known, if at all, not in her own right but as a correspondent or acquaintance of famous names or because of the two salons which she conducted during her lifetime. The discovery in Poland during the late 1970s of an archive of papers relating to her and her husband makes possible a much fuller picture, and Tewardson attempts to provide it. Unfortunately, the result is an uneasy hybrid, something between a conventional biography and a critical introduction to Rahel's writings. Not that 'critical' is quite the right word, because critical is the last thing that Tewardson is towards her subject. There is plenty of evidence that Rahel was an exceptionally intelligent woman with a wonderful gift for social intercourse who won the admiration and liking of many people more conventionally talented than herself. Not satisfied with this, however, Tewardson is advancing a radical claim, namely that Rahel was a writer of genius who has left a significant literary oeuvre. Since she wrote nothing but letters and diaries, Tewardson needs to elevate these to a literary genre. There is nothing inherently untenable in this, in so much as one can think of instances where a correspondence or a diary have become a literary classic. And from the evidence of the quotations in English (the German original is not given), a carefully edited and annotated selection of letters and diaries could make an interesting and worthwhile volume: significantly, Rahel wrote with a view to publication, and some of her correspondence was published anonymously during her lifetime. But all this would still fall a good distance short of justifying the kinds of claim Tewardson makes for Rahel's significance. As it stands, the reader is left with a strong sense of the disproportion between the claims made and the evidence offered in support of them. If a compelling argument for her significance were to be constructed, the book would need to be organized in a systematic way

which made clear what precisely her contributions were to philosophy, literary criticism, political thought, or wisdom literature (Rahel enjoyed a modest gift for aphorism). As a biography too, the book is flawed. Tewarson does not have a biographer's talent and her account fails to bring her subject to life or to convey a vivid sense of her subject's world. This is a great pity, for uneventful though Rahel's life was, her position as an intelligent, gifted, independent woman in a world which had little use for such a creature (thwarted also by an anti-semitism which, if anything, was exacerbated by the Emancipation Edict of 1812 and which existed even in the 'liberal' circles where she and her friends moved) makes her a figure of genuine interest, particularly in the fraught histories of female liberation and German-Jewish relations. Whatever the failings of this volume, it undoubtedly supersedes Hannah Arendt's earlier portrait, and we can be grateful to Tewarson for opening the way to a fairer assessment of Rahel's life and work.

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Christopher J.P. Smith. *A Quest for Home: Reading Robert Southey*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997. Pp. 372. hb £30, pb £17.50. ISBN 0 85323 511 2, 0 85323 X.

In spite of its apparent confusion of aims, this is a valuable and welcome book on the Romantic poet everyone is now wanting to talk about (and I have to plead guilty here). Conscious that there is no edition in print, Christopher Smith declares his wish to 'put forward the case for a new edition of the early work ... , as this would be invaluable from the point of view of its relevance to the emergence of the Lyrical Ballads alone.' His conclusion trumpets that 'it is obvious that a new edition of the poems needs to be assembled'. Tell that to the publishers who still fight shy of a selection, let alone a fully-fledged edition! The awkward grammatical reference to the Lyrical Ballads in that first quotation underlines, in Smith's case, his own uncertainty as to the claims he wants to make for his poet. His reassessment is combined with a focus on what he sees as Southey's 'search for home', and these two aspects do not always lie easily together. On the one hand, a Freudian desire to understand the poetry in terms of childhood loss (though mercifully the 'fort/da' stuff disappears after its early obtrusions); on the other, and against that Lindopian wish for a Southeyan 'psychodrama', what he strangely calls 'a critical anthology' of the early work. In practical terms, what we get is a series of studies of the 1797 volume, the Fall of Robespierre, Joan of Arc, the Westbury poems, and Madoc, plus some rather laboured readings of particular shorter poems such as 'The Retrospect', the 'Hymn to the Penates', and 'On a Landscape of Gaspar Poussin'. This can therefore be seen as a latter-day version of Haller's study of Southey's life up to 1803, the year of the move to Greta Hall, a cut-off point rightly ridiculed by Jean Raimond (quite often mentioned by Smith, but not, for obvious reasons, in this context). It is, as one would expect, much more sophisticated than Haller's pioneering effort, but the fact remains that Southey's move to the Lakes is by no means the end of the matter; any critical claims for him as writer (and this means prose as well as poetry), must rest on the vast body of work he produced in those last forty-odd years of his life. And the 'quest for home' assumes a different kind of significance after 1803: is not as though by settling at Keswick he has solved, as it were, the psychological problems posed by the title, and the book's declared intentions. There is, then, some muddle here, particularly noticeable in the early pages, where Smith feels he has to juggle with the dead hand of Freud (et al), the wilder absurdities of Julia Kristeva (et al), and his own

nicely absurd reductivism ('his father was neither a support nor a role-model for the boy, and his death put paid to many problems'), alongside his own more persuasive suggestions about Southey's need for father-figures. Just as Southey's tone is often uneasy (and he is duly upbraided for this), so Christopher Smith finds it hard to settle into the right register. A long sentence about 'The Retrospect', after reference to Wordsworth and Rogers, ends alarmingly, 'Southey's confessional poem somewhere in the middle of these poles, boldly dressed in its apophradic cast-offs, is the scarecrow of memory, the spectre of his heart.' Such lapses undermine much of the good work on offer, in particular in terms of the literary and political contexts. The years of Pantisocracy are obviously central to a study of this kind, and Smith offers a useful corrective to, say, the Coleridgean emphasis of Everest's account, but sadly not incorporating the implications of Nicholas Roe's more recent explorations. It makes excellent sense to see *The Fall of Robespierre* and *Joan of Arc* in this complex context, but both chapters would have benefitted from a more crisply analytical approach. The Spenserian, Shakespearean, or Miltonic underpinnings are well worked through, and there is a strong sense of Smith's engagement with Southey as a complicated and rewarding writer. His exploration of the 1798 poems is especially pertinent (although a reference to *Psycho* in connection with 'The Idiot' makes you wonder, again, about his critical bearings); the section on Southey's fascination with 'Inscriptions' rightly makes the Wordsworthian link (but without the insights offered by Devlin and Ferguson), and is one part of the book where there is a sense of Southey's having more than the beginnings of a particular and peculiar poetic theory. That is where the other epics, such as *Thalaba* (1801, after all), *The Curse of Kehama*, and *Roderick*, would have been so much to the point. For all its occasional oddities, this book for the most part transcends its origins as a thesis, and stands as an impressive account of at least some major aspects of Southey's work. Whilst it is not the author's fault that the margins are so infuriatingly slender, he deserves full credit for starting the process of digging deep beneath what Grigson noted as Southey's still, calm surface.

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