

# Reviews

**Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian*. Oxford University Press, 2003. Pp. 384. £25.00. ISBN 0199245320.**

Though an important figure in her own time, Hannah More (1745-1833) was ignored by the generation of feminist scholars who began, during the 1970s, to rediscover forgotten or depreciated women writers. The degree to which these scholars overlooked More is revealed by the fact that no full-length biography appeared between 1952, when M. G. Jones's sensible but rather perfunctory *Hannah More* was published, and the appearance of Anne Stott's *Hannah More: The First Victorian* in 2003. Yet More was not only the most widely-read British woman writer of her era, the author of plays, conduct books, tracts for the poor, a best-selling novel and a variety of devotional works, but also a historical figure with connections to the bluestocking circle, to David Garrick and Samuel Johnson, to Horace Walpole, to the abolitionist movement and to the first and second generations of the Clapham sect, most notably William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton and Thomas Babington Macaulay.

What explains the fact that feminists of the 1970s and 80s paid so little attention to More? More had a reputation as a political conservative; as a self-styled Evangelical saint; as a repressive educator and philanthropist who offered instruction and help to the poor on condition that they accept their place in a supposedly God-given social order; and finally as a woman who won public glory by counselling other women to live modestly within the private sphere. This reputation did not attract the scholars who found More's contemporary, the fearless,

unconventional deist Mary Wollstonecraft, a congenial figure. A woman writer who did so little to forward the agenda of contemporary feminism was, apparently, best consigned to silence. But by ignoring More, the scholars of this period postponed the discovery that her reputation as a sanctimonious conservative is not fully deserved.

More's first biographer, William Roberts, whose *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More* appeared in the year after her death, bears much responsibility for the distorted picture of More, which, as Stott notes, was until very recently 'firmly embedded in the historiography' concerning her (p. ix). Roberts felt free to alter More's correspondence to fit his view of the way that the founding mother of the Evangelical movement ought to have written. Since few of More's letters were in print in any other form, Roberts's portrait of More became the standard picture, but in the early twentieth century that picture, which corresponded to its creator's ideal of pious femininity, appeared less flattering. When, in the 1990s, several feminist scholars, noticing their predecessors' oversight, began to pay serious attention to More, the results were mixed. A number of these scholars, relying on a narrow range of sources and often using Roberts's work uncritically, show an 'almost personal dislike of More' as they dress up the old charges of excessive religiosity and hypocritical conservatism in the languages of cultural studies and psychoanalysis (p. x). Others, such as Mitzi Myers and Patricia Demers, present a more balanced and sympathetic picture.

None of these commentators, however, has come close to presenting a portrait of More that is as subtle, complex, convincing and solidly grounded in extensive research as the one delineated by Anne Stott's superb biography. Stott spent nine years researching this book, and her hard work has certainly paid

dividends. She consulted over a dozen collections of More's unpublished papers and correspondence, most of which were ignored by earlier researchers. These lively letters, which often escaped bowdlerisation and from which Stott quotes judiciously, give a good sense of More's humorous side. Stott uses the correspondence to prove that More often engaged in a 'balancing act' whereby she presented her views as less progressive, both politically and socially, than they really were, in order to retain her influence with the conservative upper classes whose beliefs, manners and conduct she hoped to influence (p. 160). Stott also does an excellent job of showing the positive aspects of More's much-criticised philanthropic projects.

In addition to mastering More's unpublished papers, Stott has studied, with exemplary thoroughness, the huge body of historical material that is relevant to understanding More's wide-ranging activities. In elegant, economical and nicely paced prose, she presents the information one needs in order to comprehend More's aims, choices and the constraints under which she laboured. Stott knows that the context in which More acted is 'hard to recover at this distance of time', but, unlike some other commentators, she invariably makes the effort to locate More in her own era, instead of judging her harshly by the standards of the present (p. 256). Indeed, Stott suggests that our world may not be much more humane or enlightened than the one More inhabited, though we like to think it is. Thus, discussing the fate of the insurance societies for poor women, which More founded and funded, Stott dryly notes that they 'continued to exist until the twentieth century, when the creation of the welfare state *seemed* to make them superfluous' (pp. 118-19, my italics).

This biography not only does a magnificent job of illuminating its subject, it also offers a fascinating picture of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century

British society and politics as seen through the lens of one extraordinary woman's activities.

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**Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler (eds), *Unfolding the South: Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers and Artists in Italy*. Manchester University Press, 2003. Pp. 246.**

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**Pb: £15.99, ISBN 071906139X.**

Lively and detailed, meticulous and stimulating, these essays reconsider British involvements in Risorgimento Italy by focussing on women – writers, painters, historians and travellers. Elizabeth Barrett Browning is famous in this area and she is at the centre of several of the essays: Richard Cronin considers *Casa Guidi Windows* as an attempt to discover the stance of the true citizen, 'at once separate from the state and joined to it' (p. 50); Isobel Armstrong addresses the same quality in the poem – its highlighting of a viewer distanced from events – and finds in it Barrett Browning's recognition that 'a mediated world is inevitable' and that 'the multiplicity of symbol forces choice upon the subject' (p. 68). These essays form an arresting pair, synergistic by virtue of their closeness and divergence. Alison Chapman's reading of Barrett Browning's later *Poems Before Congress* develops these concerns by observing that the poems are 'both prophetic and performative' (p. 88). Their lack of widespread critical acceptance arises perhaps from their attempt to enact revolution as well as to inspire it, their wish to be immediate amidst the mediated.

Though no one else receives such concerted attention from the volume, the collection has extraordinary breadth coupled with unusual detail. Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, who have collaboratively done so much to revive

interest in female Victorian painters, contribute two separate essays: Marsh on Marie Spartali Stillman, connected to the Rossetti circle, and Nunn on, among others, Jane Benham Hay. Marsh evokes in vivid detail the Florentine milieu of Spartali Stillman, where the artist lived for many years, plus her all-too feminine reticence and submissiveness to an oppressive husband. Italy provided the perfect environment for her to develop her own 'delicate aesthetic offering quiet harmonies in soft pinks and greens' (p. 177). Benham Hay's Italy was more of a battleground. Like Barrett Browning, she addressed the relation between England and Italy – between world-power and backward, inchoate nation. Her paintings present the visible landscape of Italy with an unusual degree of realism and question the English viewer's expectations of romance – expectations Spartali Stillman embraced. Hay's pair of paintings, *England and Italy* and *A Boy in Florentine Costume of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century*, exhibited in 1859, approach this task of disruption and challenge from opposite directions. Nunn contextualises the paintings wonderfully well, in relation to the artistic traditions they draw upon and the moment of their production. The female painter seems to have made herself politically astute and engaged, even powerful in these paintings, despite the ingrained Victorian prejudice against her being so.

Esther Schor likewise draws attention to hitherto little-known figures. Theodosia Garrow Trollope, married to Anthony Trollope's brother Thomas Adolphus, 'is today all but unknown' (p. 92); Frances Power Cobbe has been written about by Barbara Caine and Lori Williamson, among others, but like Trollope she benefits here from Schor's insightful combination of empirical knowledge and attentiveness to style. Schor observes that debates surrounding the marriage laws in English society were brought – sometimes subliminally – into writing about Italian politics: the unification of the country was

allegorised she says 'as a marriage between *la bella Italia* and the King of Savoy, Vittorio Emanuel II' (p. 91). Her account of Cobbe's withdrawal from 'the pulsating, busy world' of modern Italy 'towards a far quieter, meditative one' sympathetically perceives its implication that 'for striving women, as for striving nations, regeneration is no easy matter' (pp. 107, 109). Her study offers a possible explanatory context for Spartali Stillman's paintings too, indicating the many subtle interconnections that this collection suggests.

Another is dreams: repeatedly these critics discover Victorian women dreaming of *la bella Italia*, and seeing her female form rise up before them, as if from the dead. Alison Chapman's account of Barrett Browning's spiritualist enthusiasm finds many parallels in Angela Leighton's compelling discussion of writings from later in the century in which Italy or the Renaissance rise up from the dead. Catherine Maxwell's informative and illuminating essay on Vernon Lee follows a similar path. In their introduction Stabler and Chapman argue that Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* provided an enduring image not only of Italy but of the female artist as well. Later nineteenth-century women writers were 'haunted by their fictive precursor, Corinne' (p. 1). That haunting, it emerges, took a perhaps surprisingly direct form in these dream-visions; psychologically, too, it was profound. The collection as a whole confirms and develops what Schor puts most directly: that the fate of Italy, politically and socially, was seen as the fate of women, as cultural agents and in their struggle against constraints on their social and personal conduct.

Francis O'Gorman's essay on Margaret Oliphant and her relation to Ruskin's influential account of Venice raises similar issues though with a somewhat different slant. Oliphant is seen in conflict with a more specifically literary male authority figure. Similarly, Nicola Trott's

impressive account of *Romola* concentrates on George Eliot's struggle to write a version of English that conveyed something of its Florentine sources. There is a whole further book to be written, I think, about those writing of Italy from the outside – Felicia Hemans, for example, who never went there. Elizabeth Gaskell's idea of 'the south', similarly, finds Italianate landscapes in Hampshire.

Jane Stabler's opening essay also stands to one side of the collection as a whole, though in this instance simply because of its attention to Romantic period writers: Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Hester Thrale Piozzi and Charlotte Eaton. Stabler's argument – that Catholic Italy brought these women into conflict with their own Protestant affiliations and prejudices – is interesting in itself. Here, it also suggests how a visit to Italy could turn from a touristic spectacular into the source of a more involved sense of loyalty and affiliation. Italy, in other words, made patriotism doubtful.

For the Romanticist, perhaps, this is the most important chapter. Its importance is enhanced, however, by the collection's demonstration that Romantic figures, such as Keats, Shelley and Byron, were invoked and 'resurrected' in later nineteenth-century engagements with Italy. The book undemonstratively disrupts period boundaries. It hints too that English concern with the Italian question was in part an attempt to carry forward a specifically English Romanticism – one that was European in its outlook and progressive in its politics. Moreover, it was a form of Romanticism that destabilised gender-relations, providing in Keats a 'figure of feminine martyrdom' (p. 10) who, like Corinne, haunted and empowered nineteenth-century women.

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**Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 328. £45. ISBN 0521816688.**

Adriana Craciun's groundbreaking study explores a subject scholars of Romanticism have been unwilling to confront – the figure of the fatal woman in writing by women. The result is an important and provocative book. Craciun contests a number of truths universally acknowledged, beginning with her contention that the femme fatale is not simply a product of the male imagination, but forms a distinct female literary tradition. Another misconception is the stability of the sex/gender distinction. Drawing upon the work of writers like Thomas Laqueur and Foucault, Craciun maintains that 'Romantic-period writers not only have questioned the nature of femininity and culturally constructed gender, but that they also questioned the stability and naturalness of sex itself' (p. 3). Above all, Craciun challenges the idea that women 'eschew violence, destructiveness, and cruelty, except in self-defense or rebellion' (p. 8). She 'uncouples' the fatal woman from an ahistorical 'narrative of male sexual neurosis' to demonstrate that 'the femme fatale was an ideologically charged figure that both male and female writers invested with a range of contemporary political, sexual, and poetic significations' (p. 16). In so doing, she would undo a false dichotomy of femme fatale and violent woman and in place offers a view of 'inherent "doubleness"' that offers 'an especially productive perspective on the development of sexual difference in the Romantic period' (p. 7).

The volume is divided into six chapters that recover significant contributions that women writers offer through explorations of the fatal woman. Chapter one examines the ultimate femme fatale, Mary Lamb, whose writings for children seem incompatible with her murder of her

mother and bouts of mental illness. Craciun refuses to separate the murderer from the writer of children's literature or view her violent behaviour as rebellion against male power. Violence 'remained a part of her writing, as violence remains a necessary part of all symbolic systems' (p. 36). Chapter two considers Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Robinson within the context of the French Revolution and their notions of women's bodily strength as a place of possible mutability that would erase their inferiority and difference from men. Craciun stresses the role of the corporeal in their writings through which the categories of mind and body are destabilised to suggest that physical equality is a means of political equality (p. 60). The third chapter looks at representations of Marie Antoinette, in particular Mary Robinson's unique imagining of public seductress and private mother as a figure of the embodiment of female Genius (p. 104). While the figure of Sadean violence and depravity shadows Wollstonecraft and Robinson, chapter four analyses Charlotte Dacre's Sadean Gothic bodies, notably in *Zofloya* whose subversive nature celebrates the pleasures of destruction, destroys a stable subject identity or a 'natural corporal identity' (p. 153) and extends possibilities for women writers. The fifth chapter concerns the poetry of Scottish writer Anne Bannerman whose Gothic poems contain figures of the fatal female related to writings of Coleridge, Schiller and Johnson. Bannerman explores the destructive nature of a 'feminized ideal, and of an ideal woman' (p. 194). The final chapter looks at Letitia Landon's philosophy of decomposition as a gendered critique of Romantic idealism. Her figures of the prophetess, enchantress and mermaid unite 'her poetic powers with those of destruction and death' (p. 197). Landon's works question the figure of the 'proper woman as benevolent and non-violent' (p. 197).

Craciun's conviction that 'these writers would benefit from a (feminist) reading that actively resists feminism's persistent ideology of the consolation of women's natural nonviolence and benevolence' (p. 9) is bound to provoke controversy. This provocation is balanced with argument that is always illuminating and intelligent, and grounded in scholarly research. Her approach is wide-ranging, drawing upon writings on sexuality, literary theory and historical and social contexts. Her field of reference is of a broad scope within the period, and she does not hesitate to cite modern writers and contexts when relevant. Plates for four illustrations included in her analysis accompany the text. An extensive bibliography provides testament to the depth of research and learning that went into the writing of this volume. Aware that her argument might be subject to oversimplification, a virtue of this study is that Craciun is ever careful to make clear what she is *not* arguing.

This volume marks a significant scholarly achievement, marred simply by the wish from time to time for further exploration of works by the writers examined. Craciun views the 1790s and the climate of the French Revolution as a 'brief window of opportunity' (p. 18), while later writers are less political than Robinson and Wollstonecraft. Nevertheless Dacre, Bannerman and Landon explore the body in a manner that complicates the sexualised readings by modern critics. Craciun offers a valuable argument that invites us to extend her readings to other writers and to reconsider how we read and teach Romanticism.

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**Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy*. Stanford University Press, 2002. Pp. 346.**

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The central argument of *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* is that ‘a revisionary understanding of Biblical prophecy as poetry, elaborated throughout the eighteenth century, prepared the way for a Romantic mythology of the poet as prophet’ (p. 250). Such an argument leads Balfour, necessarily, into readings of some of the key prophetic passages of the Bible and into examining a range of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century authors that goes beyond the purview of most recent Anglo-centric, monoglot and historically delimited accounts of Romanticism. The second chapter, for example, explores the ways in which a number of Romantic and ‘pre-Romantic’ authors – Wordsworth, Collins, Gray, Young, Smart, P. B. Shelley, Schlegel, Klopstock, Novalis and Fichte – explore and employ the rhetorical strategies of prophecy. Balfour then moves back in time to consider what he calls ‘prophetic figures in eighteenth-century interpretation’ – Robert Lowth, Richard Hurd, William Warburton, Herder and Eichhorn. He shows that Lowth’s *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753/1787) made it possible to regard biblical prophecy as a poetic mode or strategy rather than (or as well as) the mediated word of God. Lowth did this not simply by identifying parallelism as the Old Testament’s characteristic textual device, but by showing that prophetic power is generated by an array of linguistic traits – including enigmatic, indeterminate figuration and a peculiar use of tense in which history and prophecy seem to be reversed. In this way, although he ‘wrote as a Christian and a believer’, Lowth’s analysis of the textual strategies of biblical prophecy ‘helped open the sacred text to the powerful revisionary readings undertaken by the Romantic poets’ (Balfour, p. 77).

Balfour then examines the development of German biblical criticism at the end of the eighteenth century, especially in the writings of Eichhorn and Herder. Herder’s interest in the prophetic mode is mainly

concerned with its role in the formation of a unified nation: ‘Herder underscores the ability of Moses to *address* his people as “one person,” as if they were a single moral being. Moreover, all subsequent prophets are said to speak in the same way for “the whole people”’ (p. 113). This was not merely of theological or historical interest since Herder believed that the prophetic mode could play a similar role for modern nations, especially Germany: ‘The Hebrews, for Herder, are not a thing of the past but a model for an elusive future’ (p. 114). Curiously, however, Balfour fails to link Herder’s reading of biblical prophecy either with the resurgence of the prophetic in Romanticism or with the radical millenarianism of seventeenth-century Europe – despite quoting E. P. Thompson’s suggestion that ‘The closer we are to 1650, the closer we seem to Blake’ (p. 127). Although he is alert to the link between the prophetic and nationalism (of various stripes) in the other writers he examines, Balfour is much more keen to ‘deconstruct’ texts than to read them as interventions in socio-political discursive formations. His textual analyses often seem determined by a set of reading protocols developed in the critical theory of twenty or so years ago that have now largely lost their power to excite or illuminate. With a growing sense of inevitability, Balfour repeatedly exposes paradoxes, contradictions, interpretative ‘violence’, abysses, supplements, moments where (we are told) it is impossible to distinguish literal from figural, and claims that language can never be about anything other than itself – a claim that, if true, would undermine Balfour’s own scholarship and much of his argument.

In the final section of *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* Balfour seeks to make good his claim that the achievements of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century British and German biblical critics/scholars constituted one of the

enabling conditions for the use of the prophetic mode in Romantic poetry. He does so by developing readings of three poets – Blake, Hölderlin and Coleridge – for whom the prophetic had particular, though significantly different, implications. Yet Balfour’s reading of the philosophical and theological prose texts he gathers together is often more illuminating than his interpretation of the poetry they are supposed to illuminate. A chapter on Blake begins with convincing if predictable readings of *America* and *Europe* (though it’s not clear how the rest of the book contributes to those readings), but is mostly devoted to an intricate reading of *Milton* that serves to compound and valorise that text’s opaque strangeness. In the following chapter, in the middle of a not wholly satisfying reading of Hölderlin’s ‘Germanien’, Balfour embarks on a long ‘Excursus on Revelations, Representation, and Religion in the Age of German Idealism’ in which he develops a superb account of the interplay between theology and idealism in Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Niethammer but which does not really serve to illuminate the ‘moment of truth’ in Hölderlin’s poem. And in the final chapter on Coleridge, Balfour avoids poetry altogether in order to attack the poetics and politics of *The Statesman’s Manual*. The book ends with this negative critique of Coleridge and there is no conclusion to the overall argument. Although he suggests that ‘Prophecy emerges [in Anglo-German biblical criticism] as “political art”’ (p. 123), Balfour offers no real account of why English and German Romantic poets might have found the prophetic mode so attractive or necessary in an age of nationalism and counter-nationalism stimulated by the changing course of the French Revolution.

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**Philip Shaw, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. 260. £45. ISBN 0333994353.**

At the time, Waterloo seemed to close and define an age, ending years of fighting in a final cataclysmic engagement. Wellington’s victory ensured the restoration of monarchy in France and the triumph of conservatives in Britain. His stern grasp of strategy and still tighter grip on the contemporary media elevated him to the status of national hero. Strikingly, Wellington’s achievement was heralded in terms that stressed the continuity of his courage within longstanding narratives of heroic endeavour and British tenacity yet equally introduced claims that the Iron Duke represented a new kind of Briton and a superlative modern fighting man. In the story of Wellington and Waterloo there was much for patriotic Britons to extol and enjoy. But such celebrations always existed alongside and were even haunted by a less confident, more doubtful sense of what had occurred. The importance of the battle could not be denied, yet it was not always easily reconciled with simple narratives of nation building or personal accomplishment: 50,000 men were killed in a single day, thousands more were maimed or mentally scarred; after the battle bodies of men and horses, their weapons, kit and an astonishing amount of rubbish littered the field. A scene of wreckage and monstrous violence confronted those who gazed on the battlefield (as very many did) in the months after the battle. Even those who merely read about the conflict were struck by the vast, impersonal and mechanised violence of the event. From this perspective although the bloodshed of Waterloo remained sublime – such a level of destruction could hardly be otherwise – it was also potentially unmeaning and unending, a day of brutality that questioned the battle’s observers as much as its participants and cast heroism,

particularly in its patriotic and chivalric modes, into doubt.

These confused and uncertain identifications are the subject of Philip Shaw's book. Shaw examines responses to the battle from the major poets of the Romantic canon: Southey, Scott, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Byron. Shaw's tight focus on the matter of Waterloo (rather than conflict more generally) means that Hemans, Smith and Shelley are notably absent. However, the poets on whom Shaw focuses are well chosen, each having an important and distinct perspective upon the battle, its meaning and implications. Shaw places their work within the context of its initial production: the literary marketplaces of volume and magazine publication. There the work of Southey, Scott or Byron vied for the public's attention with Romantic poetry's lesser lights and with the extravagant claims made for battlefield visits, panoramas and other visual representations of the battle. Shaw offers an illuminating study of this material, suggesting that the vogue for battle tours and art spectacles enabled non-combatants to enjoy a kind of involvement through the vast canvasses and encompassing perspectives of the panorama. Shaw explores how this seemingly cumbersome apparatus worked as a rather subtle form of ideological engagement, smoothing out the violence of the battle, making Wellington truly heroic and blurring the distinction between soldier and citizen; participant and mere observer. However, Shaw's real interest lies with the poetry of the period and with the forms of ontology Waterloo produced. He is an accomplished critic in this field, nicely combining theoretical insights (drawn from an admirable range of modern writers including Benjamin, Lacan, Scarry and Žižek) with deft analysis of form, metre and image. The chapter on Scott, for example, is excellent. Shaw explores how Scott, like many of the writers discussed in this book,

struggled to find the right genre within which to present Waterloo; epic, pastoral and romance were all tried and all proved only partially successful. Shaw suggests that Scott's poetry is made uncertain by two unresolved (even irresolvable) contradictions. First, Scott's desire to represent the war as a heroic encounter was confronted by his awareness that Waterloo's fragmented, shattered remains displayed the filthy business of war. Second, Scott hoped to find in war (and this is why he was such an enthusiastic volunteer) a coherent identity for both the individual and the state. Yet Waterloo revealed that the nation rested, even relied, on a level of violence that appeared at once both to make and to undermine the identity of the state and the subject. Similar anxieties haunted Coleridge as he grappled with the complexities of nationhood after the battle. War seemed to make the nation cohere as everyone pulled in more or less the same direction; yet this very effort existed in a nasty relation to disharmony and destruction undermining the fiction of national unity even as it was made. Like Wordsworth, Coleridge wanted Waterloo to mean triumph and resolution, but found it difficult to make it do so. Byron, pointedly, had other objectives. Shaw's analysis of the poet, which is a nice response to Malcolm Kelsall's work, explores how Byron's writing on Waterloo, principally but not exclusively in *Don Juan*, is not merely an expression of the frustrations of Whig ideology, but a principled assertion of poetry's power to refute complacent unfeeling history. Boldly comparing Byron to Benjamin, Shaw argues that Byron disrupts the providential accounts of the battle, countering the government's claims to 'empty homogenous time', to insist instead on the disruptive and violent aspects of the battle, a violence that only poetry could reach or redeem.

After reading *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* it is clear that Waterloo offered neither resolution nor

salvation. Rather, the aftermath of the battle disclosed that the nation was wounded, not just in the bodies and minds of those who had suffered in Belgium, but in its modes of self-articulation, its art and culture. This argument, conducted with much care and thoroughness, makes Shaw's book a very real contribution to the study of Romantic poetry, especially in relation to the experience of war.

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**Steven E. Jones (ed.), *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. 231. £40. ISBN 0312294964.**

Recent books by Marcus Wood, Gary Dyer and Steven E. Jones, among others, have much advanced our understanding of the prominence and significance of satire in the Romantic period. Jones's new volume continues the work of these studies and, like them, 'increases the richness and complexity of our critical understanding of Romantic-period culture' (p. 7). It is full of fresh perspectives, and repeatedly pulls the carpet from beneath readings of the period that privilege 'the Romantic sincerity of satiric victims over the authority of satire' itself (pp. 4-5).

The first four chapters are interested in 'taste-making in the public sphere' (p. 8). Tim Fulford opens on a Romantic-period satirical culture that was very different from the Pope-Cowper-Wordsworth tradition of commenting on the city from rural retreat – and that undermined that tradition. Fulford foregrounds a culture of 'pamphlet, magazine ... handbill' and 'popular caricatures' (p. 12) that was complicit in the 'orientalized' consumer world it dissected and that gained its authority from knowingly speaking 'from within' (p. 27) that world. Michael Gamer's chapter concentrates on William Gifford's 1791 satire, *The Baviad*,

revising the normal understanding of it as an 'aesthetic rejection' of the 'supposedly corrupt poetical style' of the Della Cruscans (p. 33). Gamer persuasively argues that its target was, in fact, the 'printer, newspaper editor and circulating library mogul John Bell' (p. 34), owner of *The World* and therefore the publisher of the Della Cruscans. For Gifford, the Della Cruscan phenomenon highlighted the much larger cultural threat posed by Bell. Marcus Wood then considers satirical treatments of slavery in the period. Describing instances of the 'weird and highly charged status of the slave body' (p. 56) in works by Boswell, Teale and Wordsworth, Wood shows how 'satire provided an unusually open space for the expression of white sexual pathologies' (p. 56). Nicola Trott discusses the Romantic-period reception of Wordsworth's poetry and highlights the 'intricate' interactions between the 'reviewers' satire' and the 'Romantics' poetry' (p. 72). Trott lucidly demonstrates how these interactions collapse distinctions between, for example, satirist and 'Romantic bard' or 'neoclassical' and 'Romantic'. Even the distinction between original and parodic becomes unstable in a satirical culture where parody 'provides the determining context' (p. 90) for understanding poetry – where 'parody had become the original of which the poems were the imitators' (p. 88).

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters 'focus on women and children – as authors, readers, and characters – at what might be called the satiric scene of instruction' (p. 8). Karl Kroeber argues that *Northanger Abbey* teaches 'a practical psychic flexibility that enables us to enjoy grappling with the difficulties' thrown at us by evolution (p. 110). Particularly, the novel teaches a 'self-reflexiveness' (p. 107) about judgement, language, the imagination and the 'hegemony of false knowledge every society necessarily fosters' (p. 110). Donelle R. Ruwe shows that 'our celebration of [William]

Roscoe's escapist fantasy', *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast* (1807), 'has blinded us to the very real political protests and social work found in other contemporaneous animal poems' (p. 119). Of particular interest here is Catherine Ann Dorset's satirical parody of Roscoe's poem, *The Peacock 'at Home'* (1809), excluded from the canon, Ruwe argues, as a result of tensions between Romantic ideologies of childhood and political satire. Stuart Curran then discusses Jane Taylor's *Essays in Rhyme, on Morals and Manners* (1816) showing that, 'in the endemic secularity of the Romantic period', Taylor 'stands as a unique religious voice using satirical means to undo the very essence of satire' (p. 150).

The remaining four chapters discuss 'topical and political satire in a variegated range of multi-media forms' (p. 8). Gary Dyer focuses on Thomas Moore's *Twopenny Post-Bag* (1813) and *Fudge Family in Paris* (1818) as parodies – and powerful critiques – of a principal surveillance practice of both the Society for the Suppression of Vice and the Government: the interception of letters. Kyle Grimes uses the figure of William Hone to illustrate a kind of topical satire – what he calls 'hacker satire' (p. 174) – that, for Grimes, had its birth in the Romantic period but is still alive and well in the 'ethic of contemporary computer hackers' (p. 175). John Strachan's topic is the 'New York barber, satirist, and indefatigable self-publicist John Richard Desborus Huggins' (p. 185), as one example of the rich interplay between advertising and literary satire/parody that ultimately blurs the distinction between these: Huggins' parodic self-publicising becomes political satire concerned with 'European geopolitical conflict' and 'contemporary American party politics' (p. 186). Finally, Marilyn Gaul offers an encyclopaedic discussion of pantomime as 'the consummate expression of both Romanticism and satire' (p. 208).

The contributors to this volume very valuably 'highlight and question many presuppositions about early-nineteenth-century literature' (p. 1) by drawing attention both to the contemporary importance of long-neglected satires and satirists and to the more general cultural centrality of satire in the period. But the volume's subtitle announces a further interest in form, and this surfaces in almost every chapter. As a result, while the reader learns a lot about the work that satire did in the culture of the Romantic period, s/he also learns a great deal about how it went about that work.

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College

**Gates, Eleanor (ed.), *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters. Together with Some Correspondence of William Hazlitt*. Essex, Connecticut: Falls River Publications, 1999. Pp. 693. \$44.95. ISBN 0966825837.**

**Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle-Sinatra (gen. eds), *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*. 6 vols. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003. Vol. 1, *Periodical Essays 1805-14*, ed. Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, pp. 414; Vol. 2, *Periodical Essays 1815-21*, ed. Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, pp. 436; Vol. 3, *Periodical Essays 1822-38*, ed. Robert Morrison, pp. 449; Vol. 4, *Later Literary Essays*, ed. Charles Mahoney, pp. 411; Vol. 5, *Poetical Works 1801-21*, ed. John Strachan, pp. 343; Vol. 6, *Poetical Works 1822-59*, ed. John Strachan, pp. 354. £475. ISBN 1851967141.**

Leigh Hunt, poet, critic and journalist, outlived his illustrious friends Keats, Shelley and Byron by so many years that his long life (1784-1859) spanned the Romantic and Victorian eras. His influence in both periods was far reaching.

He encouraged poets like Keats and Shelley, Tennyson and D. G. Rossetti. His reviews of the London stage opened the way for theatrical criticism by Coleridge, Hazlitt and Lamb; his enthusiasm for Italian arts had a fertile effect on the Pre-Raphaelites. Hunt's editorship of the *Examiner* (1808-1822) was a high point in English journalism, and his campaigning on liberal issues – which brought him a two-year prison sentence – marks him out as one of England's great reformers. His poetry is brilliant, sparkling, controversial, while his *Autobiography* (1850) is the first modern example of the genre. Poets have learned much from him. John Keats found his voice by following Hunt's example, and 'To Autumn' was the fullest expression of Hunt's idea of 'doubled pleasures'. Elizabeth Barrett remarked admiringly that Hunt's poetry makes us 'feel & see'; Robert Browning emulated his informal *brio*. Virginia Woolf said Hunt was a 'spiritual grandfather' of the modern world.

There has never been a *Complete Works of Leigh Hunt* or a *Collected Letters of Leigh Hunt*, and the materials that underlie the Pickering and Chatto edition of his work have been slow to appear. The manuscripts from the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, published since 1961 in *Shelley and his Circle 1773-1822*, have included rewarding seams of material by and about Hunt. At the University of Toledo, David Cheney has painstakingly assembled the materials for a complete edition of Hunt's letters, although, alas, this has not yet been published. In the meantime, Eleanor M. Gates's excellent *Leigh Hunt: A Life In Letters* (1999) has supplemented Thornton Hunt's heavily expurgated edition of 1862, and Luther Brewer's quirky *My Leigh Hunt Library: The Holograph Letters* (1938). Gates's book covers the years 1802 to 1857 and contains nearly 450 letters, many hitherto unpublished. The headnotes to the letters contain much information about Hunt and his correspondents, making this a valuable

work of reference for the Romantic and Victorian periods. Included here are Hunt's letters to his wife Marianne and sister-in-law Elizabeth Kent, Percy and Mary Shelley, William Hazlitt, Benjamin Haydon, Charles Cowden Clarke, Charles Ollier, Lord Holland, John Murray, Henry Brougham, Vincent Novello, Edward Moxon, Thomas Carlyle, John Forster, Bryan Waller Procter, Thomas Noon Talfourd, G. H. Lewes, Charles Dickens and Walter Savage Landor (Eleanor Gates's volume is available from Falls River Publications, PO Box 524, Essex, CT 06426, USA).

The new six-volume edition of Hunt's *Selected Writings* published by Pickering and Chatto is the first to accurately represent the scale and richness of his output. Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox have drawn extensively from Hunt's political and critical writings, 1805-1821, in *The News*, *Reflector*, *Examiner* and *Indicator*. Their annotation in these volumes is exemplary, and reflects the high standards of the edition as a whole. Robert Morrison and Charles Mahoney have explored the labyrinths of Hunt's later career in *Periodical Essays 1822-38* and *Later Literary Essays*. Their volumes include copious selections from twelve journals including *The Liberal*, *The Companion* and *The Tatler*, and generous extracts from later writings including Hunt's influential estimates of Coleridge, Keats and Shelley from *Imagination and Fancy*.

Following the disastrous reception of Wordsworth's *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807), the notes to Hunt's *The Feast of the Poets* (1814) included a perceptive essay which set the terms on which Wordsworth would be reassessed by Hazlitt and Coleridge. It was Hunt, in other words, who began the critical revaluation on which Wordsworth's reputation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was based. John Strachan's volumes of Hunt's *Poetical Works 1801-21* and *Poetical Works 1822-59*, include

the 1814 *Feast* with its notes, along with Hunt's early work in *Juvenilia* (1801), *The Story of Rimini* (1816; the revised text of 1844 is in volume 6), and *Foliage* (1818). Strachan reprints from the *Examiner* Hunt's satirical poems on Peterloo, and numerous later poems, from 1830-1860, are presented in this edition for the first time.

The editorial labour of retrieving Hunt's writings from scarce periodicals and rare editions has been immense and overwhelmingly worthwhile. Thanks to the editors of *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, it is now possible to begin a thoroughgoing reassessment of Hunt's achievement and his decisive impact on Romantic and Victorian culture.

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**Tim Milnes, *Knowledge and Indifference in English Romantic Prose*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 278. £45. ISBN 0521810981.**

'Nothing puzzles me more than time and space', wrote Charles Lamb to his friend Thomas Manning in 1810, 'and yet nothing puzzles me less, for I never think of them'. Lamb's is a classic example of Romantic indifference, a self-conscious denial of the problem of knowledge which seems nevertheless to insist on its importance. This excellent discussion of Romantic epistemology examines this double-minded approach: Tim Milnes sets out to show the ways in which Romantic writers are deeply interested in philosophical thought, even as they strive to conceal their involvement. Examining Wordsworth, Hazlitt and Coleridge in a context both of eighteenth-century philosophical thought and modern post-analytic philosophy, Milnes traces what he terms 'the serpentine movement of English Romantic theoretical prose' (p. 15), its alternations between engagement with and abstention from argument.

Although critics from Abrams onwards have recognised the preoccupation with 'knowing' in English Romantic writing, Milnes moves the argument forward by concentrating on the uncertainties of Romanticism's negotiations with the theory of knowledge. He shows the great impact of Hume's separation of truth and value, and demonstrates how, in a post-Humean context, writers such as Wordsworth and Hazlitt simultaneously demonstrate a dependency on foundationalism, and a desire to question its boundaries.

A recurring theme of this study is the way in which Romanticism's embrace of the ever-evolving creative process is coupled with the desire for epistemic security, the certainty offered by firm foundations. These conflicts are particularly evident in Wordsworth's prefatory and prose works. Throughout his life, Wordsworth was to negotiate with his need to distance himself from fact-foundationalism, and his simultaneous distrust of unfettered, lawless creativity, a distrust paralleled by his political anxieties, and by his ambivalent attitude toward the reading 'public'. His discussions of the language of feeling in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, struggle to reconcile an empirically given notion of 'truth' with his own concept of poetic spontaneity. As Milnes neatly puts it, Wordsworth's prose 'plays leap-frog with tropes of empirical verification, as spontaneity is checked by veridical observation' (p. 76). He shows how Wordsworth developed different strategies to deal with this, ranging from the idea that poetry should imitate the 'real language of men' in the 1800 Preface, to the notion that sheer poetic power may compensate for a lack of actual knowledge, which emerges in the 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' of 1815.

The questions of power and knowledge raised by this discussion lead into a consideration of Hazlitt's similarly

ambivalent approach to epistemology. His is 'an indifference to knowledge which betrays a compulsive attachment to truth' (p. 109). Milnes characterises this paradox as 'immanent idealism', and traces the development of Hazlitt's philosophy of abstraction from his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* onward in support of this. The discussion of Hazlitt's Dissenting background is interestingly paired with an enquiry into how his training as a painter may have affected his philosophical thought, allowing insights into his oscillatory approach to empiricism. It shaped and formed his thinking, and yet, through his assertion that the mind had an active part in determining moral knowledge, he went beyond the conditions of empirical thought: his position came into conflict with the very language he was using to describe it.

Wordsworth and Hazlitt were negotiating with patterns of thought belonging to British empiricism: in the second half of this study, Milnes examines Coleridge's dialogues with a new kind of foundationalism, based on his readings of Kant. Plunged into German intellectualism in the late 1790s, Coleridge was encountering new possibilities such as transcendental argument, which offered ways out of the empirical dilemmas of British philosophical thought. Milnes pulls apart the tangled philosophical preoccupations of *Biographia*, the 1818 edition of *The Friend* and the 1819 *Philosophical Lectures* to show how different discourses shape Coleridge's thinking. The book closes with a detailed discussion of the ways in which Coleridge's delicate negotiations with post-Kantian concerns affected his later attempts to 'establish a new doctrine of theosophy', harmonising philosophy and religion. Yet the tensions between, on the one hand, his desire to ground knowledge in certainty, and, on the other, his Christian reverence for things invisible

and ultimately unknowable, remained unresolved.

It is this continual tension which makes Romantic philosophy so deeply fascinating. As Milnes shows, the sinuous patterns of commitment and resistance in Romantic discourse mirror the preoccupations of post-modern reading and criticism. In some senses, we share the dilemmas of knowledge faced by the Romantics, the puzzling uncertainties Lamb jokes about. Coping with these, Milnes suggests, requires that 'literary criticism ... give up its quest for indifference, just as philosophy is gradually giving up its quest for certainty' (p. 18). His own elegant study goes some way toward achieving this. Milnes illuminates the relationship between Romantic philosophy and literature; in doing so, he affords new insights into contemporary approaches to cross-disciplinary criticism.

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**Thomas Barran, *Russia Reads Rousseau 1762-1825*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2002. Pp. 404. \$89.95. ISBN 0810118440.**

**Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*. London: Allen Lane, 2002. Pp. 729. £25. ISBN 0713995173.**

In 1841, Richard Ford wrote to George Borrow, an early translator of Russian literature into English, to express his contempt for Russians and their culture: '[I] regard them as barbarians, and what is more, uninteresting barbarians – Scythians in Paris-cut coats'. Ford believed the Russians innately barbaric, in spite of their veneer of Frenchified sophistication, their glittering exteriors unable to disguise their savage Asian heritage. Despite Ford's accusations of barbarity, it was during the eighteenth century that Russia became a

European power with increasing political importance and her relationship with Western Europe was renegotiated. Thomas Barran's *Russia Reads Rousseau* and Orlando Figes' *Natasha's Dance* provide welcome studies both of the woefully under-researched interactions between Russia and the rest of Europe and the development of Russian literary and cultural identities during the Romantic period and beyond.

*Natasha's Dance* hit the headlines upon its publication last autumn when a review in the *TLS* by Rachel Polonsky queried Orlando Figes' methodology. Consequently, any achievement of this vast *Cultural History of Russia* from the eighteenth to the late twentieth century has been overshadowed by controversy about its 'originality'. Polonsky's review was at times frustrating (numerous quotations from the book taken out of context to fit the argument), at others pertinent (highlighting factual inaccuracies and sweeping statements). While the antagonism between Figes and Polonsky is best left to their legal representatives, it is the subtext to Polonsky's review which hints at more important questions about what is at stake in the writing of cultural history, especially the acclaimed, but also best-selling, kind written by Orlando Figes, whose previous study of the background to and aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution, *A People's Tragedy*, achieved massive popular as well as critical success. Can such overarching surveys ever hope to realise the complexities of a national culture? Is the term 'national culture' itself suspicious? And the perennial nightmare: does popularity with the 'general reader' entail academic suicide?

For all Polonsky's criticisms, Figes states from the outset that *Natasha's Dance* is intended as a celebration of the 'sheer diversity of Russian culture' (p. xxviii). The book's major achievement is precisely this: an impressive marshalling of a huge body of cultural fact and fiction.

Although covering a wide range of literature, art and music Figes never loses the plot and maintains a steady and sophisticated argument about each, as well as revealing the importance of an interaction between the different artistic genres. Russia's unique geographical position, straddling both Europe and Asia, has encouraged a cultural *mêlée* of East and West, and Figes offers a particularly pertinent criticism of Edward Said, who bypasses Russia and her ambivalence towards the 'Orient' completely in his work. Indeed, Russia's cultural cosmopolitanism, suggests Figes, does not end with the assumed early nineteenth-century repudiation of European style and embracing of a more Russian heritage. It continues with a clever twist during Soviet times, providing a nostalgic return to the elegance of eighteenth-century architectural and musical influences and themes.

The complexity of Russian responses to Europe and Russia's position within European culture is highlighted most impressively by an analysis of the Russian use of the French language. As Count Rostopchin ironically laments in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*: "The French are our Gods: Paris is our Kingdom of Heaven". While a Russian obsession with French culture may be one of the themes that Polonsky suggested in her *TLS* review as most obvious even to an informed general reader, Figes offers a different spin by examining more closely the speaking of Russian in daily life and the French employed in 'the sphere of thought and sentiment' (p. 103). In a fascinating angle on the sentimental language of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century literature, Figes discusses how vocabulary of the 'private world of the individual had never been developed into the Russian tongue': "gesture", "sympathy", "privacy", "impulsion" and "imagination" – none could be expressed without the use of French' (p. 50). In order to keep up with the Romantics, Russians were

compelled to speak in the French language.

The relationship between Russia and French literary language, in the form of the writings of Genevan Jean-Jacques Rousseau, forms the core of Thomas Barran's immensely detailed and painstakingly researched account of the reception, translation, adoption and reworking of the Rousseauvian oeuvre from the reign of Catherine the Great to Nicholas I's accession to the throne in 1825. *Russia Reads Rousseau* suggests that the Rousseau received by the Russians 'remain[ed] constant only in his evasion of final coherence', emerging 'in a number of guises ranging from popular composer, literary genius, educator, or dedicated patriot to misanthrope, scoundrel, proto-Jacobin, or outright lunatic' (p. xiv). So far, so familiar. Yet Barran is, of course, dealing with Rousseau's writings within the context of a country ruled by enlightened despots, and he is most impressive when analysing the effect of the Russian climate upon the translation of Rousseau's political writings. While, surprisingly, the *Discourse on Political Economy* remained exceptionally popular over this period with Russian readers both in the original French and in part or in its entirety translated into Russian, Barran's comparative textual analysis explains why this interest occurred. 'Rousseau's separation of sovereignty from the executive function of government, as well as his treatment of these topics in separate works', explains Barran, 'enabled his Russian translators to present only the work outlining the executive or administrative mechanics of government, while keeping Rousseau's discussion of the radically democratic foundations of civil society in the background' (p. 37).

In similar fashion to *Natasha's Dance*, however, *Russia Reads Rousseau* provokes questions about the validity of its form: in this case, comparative literature. The problem emerges from the

outset. Literate Russia presents Barran with only 0.5 to 1% of the entire population, and that 'a small and homogeneous elite' (p. xx). Rousseau's Russian readers are few and aristocratic: hardly representative of 'Russia'. To be fair to Barran, he is more than aware of the deficiencies of his project, but, consequently, makes his work appear overly hesitant and nervous. A question such as 'who in the Russian Empire would have responded to Rousseau's subversive message?' when answered with '[i]n all likelihood, nobody', does not inspire confidence about the efficacy of Rousseau's writing in inspiring a very nascent intelligentsia to rebel against the absolutism of the state (p. 46). Reading Rousseau alongside particularly Russian grievances also ensures a tendency to assume that Rousseau was the only commentator upon issues pertinent to the Russian situation – even when Rousseau does not mention Russia. Other remarks suggest more than conjecture. For example, Catherine the Great placed an imperial ban upon the sale of the French edition of *Émile*, which Barran interprets as having been far more serious than the blocking of a book about Peter III, simply because, in the list, *Émile* was mentioned first (p. 41).

Far more confusing is Barran's determination from the opening of *Russia Reads Rousseau* to claim that 'Rousseau's writings do form an internally coherent whole that holds together in its larger outlines' (p. xvi). He then states that: 'The reader can contrast this construction to the Russians' persistent countertendency to regard Rousseau as a fragmentary consciousness who produced a quantity of unrelated and contradictory texts' (p. xvi). According to Rousseau a coherence, which a reading of any of his internally contradictory texts would instantly implode, ensures that a false distinction is set up immediately to allow for 'tension' between Russia and Rousseau. An argument based upon Russian reaction to

an essentially consistent Rousseauvian identity allows for some odd readings, especially of the politics of confession. Barran traces a Russian tradition of mistrust of a Rousseauvian confessional discourse that slyly manipulates readers. Such a statement is contingent upon an interpretation of a work which was less than subtle in its hints of its author's ability to control an audience. Suggestions that later nineteenth-century Russian writers, Dostoevsky, for example, then 'lay bare the device' are only successful if one considers naïvely, as Barran propounds, that Rousseau believed wholeheartedly in the innocence of the confessional enterprise. The desire of protagonists to confess in late nineteenth-century Russian literature is more than apparent and need only be illustrated by *Crime and Punishment* and, more particularly, Tolstoy's final novel *Resurrection* (the latter not mentioned by Barran).

*Natasha's Dance* and *Russia Reads Rousseau* do make important strides in the rarely discussed field of Russian literature and culture in a Romantic, European context, but neither is without problems. Both Barran and Figes attempt to highlight Russia's literary and cultural heritages, but in doing so, occasionally become caught up in the very complexity of that legacy. Barran sums this up towards the close of his text, when he discusses how he has 'somewhat artificially presented the Russian reception of Rousseau as a collection of avatars, personifications of Russian readings of his particular texts and re-creations of his personality' (p. 318). It is perhaps this 'somewhat artificial' presentation that affects both *Natasha's Dance* and *Russia Reads Rousseau*, the sense of how, as Figes puts it, 'we expect the Russians to be "Russian"' (p. xxxii). A cultural bind which neither text really escapes.

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**Tom Cain (ed.), *The Poetry of Mildmay Fane, Second Earl of Westmoreland, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. Pp. 384. £75. ISBN 0719059844.***

The poetry of Mildmay Fane is not unknown to scholars of the seventeenth century, albeit mainly those concentrating on the civil war period. His collection *Otia Sacra* (1648) is an important volume of devotional and loyalist verse, and he is a key figure in the collection and transmission of manuscripts and books during the war years. He also wrote several plays that are currently in the British Library. What this volume collects, and the reason it should be celebrated, is the huge amount of manuscript verse written by this fascinating and important figure. Some of Fane's manuscript verse has been long available in his 'Fugitive Poetry' collection in the Houghton Library, Harvard. However, much of his work was sold in 1887 and 1893 by various earls of Westmoreland, and found its way to Fulbeck Hall in Lincolnshire and the Northamptonshire Record Office. Tom Cain has printed the material from these three hitherto unknown manuscripts, and has thus added another 300 or so poems to Fane's canon. In the process, Cain makes his case for Fane being accorded prestige and status as an important figure; or at least one warranting much scholarly attention: 'whatever the quality of the poetry, it almost always takes the modern reader further into the *mentalite* of the mid-seventeenth century, into contact with the contingent detail of everyday experience, than does that of more ambitious writers' (p. 3).

Cain's volume is part of a series of editions – Peter Davison's recent seminal edition of Fanshawe springs to mind – reclaiming relatively unknown poets from the graveyard of manuscript. During the period up to 1660 or so, appearance and

circulation in manuscript was as important if not more so than print. Print was suspected, particularly by Royalists wary of increasing literacy and a burgeoning public sphere. The Royalist distrust of print is expressed by Dudley, Lord North who reluctantly submitted to the 'prostitution of the Presse' when publishing his *Forest of Varieties* in 1645. However, Dudley's very metaphor betrays a conception of the text which is corporate and spatial; he fears the physical violation of his property and the possibility of misreading. His reasons for publication are the worries attendant upon writing and owning textual property in 'this plundering age'. Poets desired control of their work (Donne requested that his poems be burnt after his death) and suspected the printing press. Furthermore, during the war period several Royalist poets chose to withdraw to a lifetime of consideration and *otium*, or retirement. They stepped away from the fray, and returned to scholarly seclusion. Fane was one of these, choosing to write his private poems out of the public arena. We are only just beginning to discover and use the caches of work that still lie in manuscript, and much of this new turn towards relatively unknown poets is due to the work of editors such as Cain and Davison. Cain's scholarship in this volume is first-rate. The editing and presentation are clear and coherent, the notes unfussy and exhaustive. The edition is also nicely illustrated, important as it replicates pages from manuscript and reiterates the status of these poems as physical entities rather than reprinted 'texts'.

So is Fane worth reading? Certainly, the new poems present a poet full of variety and technical ability. We get some earlier poems from the 1620s and 1630s that are of a standard generic type. Much recent interest in Fane has been for his consideration of contemporary events, and there are more poems on the war and his reaction to it – the long poem 'The Times Steerage' is particularly insightful. His is

an interesting voice and offstage commentary on the 1640s and 1650s. Yet Fane's withdrawal from the fray, his very desire not to interact, signals an intent which is at odds with most scholarship and the attitudes of most of his contemporaries:

Whilst some delight  
 In wars to fight  
 And make the Camp their cheefest care  
 Others there are  
 Shun Discords Jarr  
 Soe build their Castles in the ayre  
 ('Upon the Castle in the Ayer  
 and Bower of Bliss', ll. 1-6).

A find of this magnitude is of great importance to those studying this period, and Cain is to be applauded for making these poems well usable for the general student.

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**Morris Eaves (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 302. Hb: £45, ISBN 0521781477. Pb: £15.99, ISBN 0521786770.**

As for other volumes of the 'Cambridge Companions to Literature' series, the reader implied by this collection of essays is the curious, but uninitiated undergraduate or graduate student. Approaching the works of William Blake, she or he may learn a lot from the practical 'travel tips' (p. 15) and useful 'navigational aides' (p. 252) supplied by Morris Eaves and his team of collaborators. Moreover, even the seasoned Blake scholar will find here an up-to-date and well-informed *vademecum* of current scholarly trends which can be put to good use in the classroom, and can also serve the purpose of a handy work of reference. For most parts, the *Companion to Blake* can be described as a custom-built and far-ranging introduction

to the poet's works in manuscript, conventional typography and illuminated printing; it is both reasonably detailed in its discussions of specific works and generous in its contextualisation of the poet's achievements. Unlike earlier attempts to come to grips with much the same textbook agenda, the book under review has not been pieced together from previously published articles. It started life as a commission from the publisher, and its editor was more or less free not only in the choice of the subjects to be treated in the book's chapters, but also in bringing together and in briefing his team of authors. The resulting publication, according to its blurb, therefore offers 'readable' and 'fresh' introductions which 'identify the key points of departure' into the complex world of Blake's productions (see front free endpaper).

How did Eaves and his collaborators tackle their task? As an introduction, the book is not primarily concerned with presenting new approaches to, or novel interpretations of, Blake's poetry and art, but with an overview of the poet's writings and with a summary of current debates in Blake criticism. Written for the beginning student, things needed to be kept simple, that is as simple as Blake's well-known 'difficulties' would permit. Though one encounters different styles and strategies of presentation, some more elegant, some more complex in their reasoning than others, all of the *Companion's* chapters remain relatively jargon-free and appear easily accessible. The documentation of the historical evidence and of the methodological concepts adhered to by the authors was reduced to a minimum, and the printing space assigned to the critical apparatus that frames the volume's two main sections has unfortunately been calculated rather too economically to serve as an antidote. It consists of a meagre 'Chronology' of dates, a sometimes courageous (and not always Damonesque) 'Glossary' of Blakean terms and characters, a reading list of less than 70

entries, and an even shorter gazetteer of Blake collections. Much printing space might have been saved, and the reduplication of information and the proliferation of citation styles may have been avoided, if only the lists for further reading here appended to the essays, had been integrated into Alexander Gourlay's short, yet sensibly arranged 'Guide' to the vast literature on the poet-printmaker. (This would have allowed for a select bibliography similar in scope to that in the 1999 Milton volume of the same series, which mentions 335 publications.)

The purpose of an introductory guidebook is reflected in the two-part structure employed by Eaves to arrange the essays and to make them readable almost as if the book was the work of one single author. Summary accounts of 'Blake's Early Works', of the prophetic books up to *The Four Zoas*, of *Milton* and of 'Jerusalem and Blake's Final Works' were solicited from Nelson Hilton, Andrew Lincoln, Mary Lynn Johnson and Robert Essick. Their succinct, erudite, and often enlightening expositions of Blake's poetic themes as well as of the stylistic devices shaping them, do not, however, take centre-stage. Rather, Eaves decided to place the discussion of 'Blake's Works' in Part II of the book which occupies scarcely one third of its pages (pp. 191-271). Before allowing the student a more detailed glimpse of the 'minute particulars' of the works themselves, the editor thought it mandatory to provide a guided tour through a *musée imaginaire* of contexts relevant for their production as well as for their historical and contemporary reception. These chapters are described as 'Perspectives' and figure as Part I of the *Companion*. They cannot be categorised as a sequence of different 'approaches' to Blake and their respective methodologies; rather, they survey his poetry and art from varying distances and from viewpoints supplied by a variety of contexts.

The innermost circle is 'William Blake and His Circle'. The effect of Aileen

Ward's knowledgeable biographical outline is affected only by the occasional tendency to 'psychologise' Blake's works as autobiography. The following chapter admirably condenses Joseph Viscomi's groundbreaking research into an illuminating account of the poet's peculiar methods of writing, etching and publishing his 'Illuminated Printing[s]'. Susan Wolfson's 'Blake's Language in Poetic Form' offers a keen and stylishly written analysis of the meaning of Blake's choice of metre, his use of enjambment, his invitation to 'vertical reading' or the poetic use he makes of repetitions. The limitations of this essay are due to the author's decision not to provide a genuinely 'fresh' introduction to Blake's poetics, but to reuse a 1996 publication devoted exclusively to *Poetical Sketches*; it is often quoted here verbatim (and without acknowledgment) for page after page. Thus, Wolfson's perspective on Blake's poetic form touches only briefly on the mature poetry of the 1790s and avoids the discussion of the subsequent epics altogether. David Bindman introduces 'Blake as a Painter'. A witty and polemical confrontation of art and poetry functions as Bindman's sub-text for a chronological record of the paintings of an artist 'who never doubted that he was the peer of any author' (p. 85). In 'The Political Aesthetic of Blake's Images', Saree Makdisi addresses the problems posed by the poet-engraver's 'composite art' for the process of reading. He asks readers to think of Blake's illuminated poetry as sort of a 'virtual text' (p. 111), and to cross-examine it in a comparative fashion which has become possible only with the advent of modern reproductive technologies, critical catalogues and a web-based Archive. This has been tried – and subjected to severe criticism – before. While such readings lead to politically correct statements, they advertise a method of reading Blake out of his time. Therefore, Makdisi's seems not very wise advice for the *historian* of literature and of art. In their contributions, both Jon Mee and Robert

Ryan investigate Blake's politics and the preeminent role played in their articulation by religious and 'enthusiast' vocabulary as well as thinking. Often drawing on the same sources, Mee foregrounds the social and political aspirations of London artisans, while Ryan untangles the processes of de- and re-mythologising the Bible in Blake's poetry. Thus having charted the intellectual milieu of Blake's times, the *Companion's* concluding 'Perspective' provides a hinge between Part I and the reader's guide to Blake's works in Part II. David Simpson's 'Blake and Romanticism' analyses not only the limits of periodisation in literary criticism, its effects of inclusion and of exclusion, but also shows how Blake has been represented according to various competing concepts of 'Romanticism(s)' during the past century.

A more thorough critique of the book's contents and of its physical properties (such as the mediocre quality of the illustrations or the wasteful layout) would yield the usual number of minor complaints. These, however, would by no means impair the reader's huge respect for the achievement of Eaves and his contributors. Their *Companion* provides a veritable hitch-hiker's guide to the galaxies that are opening up in Blake's writings, a guide which will stand the test of teaching Blake in more than the first decade of the new century.

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**Sally Bushell, *Wordsworth's Spots of Time*. Lancaster University Television / Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2002. 57 mins. VHS £29.99, DVD £35.00. ISBN 0736545549.**

**Stephen Gill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 295. Hb: £45.00, ISBN 0521641160. Pb: £15.95, ISBN 0521646812.**

How are students to come to a lively understanding of Wordsworth, an often difficult poet increasingly distant from the perspectives of the new reader? The *Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* and *Wordsworth's Spots of Time* are both designed to address this question. The *Companion* claims to offer 'students invaluable reference material'. Inevitably, it raises the question of what a 'Companion' is. Like the rest of the series, this book isn't one, in the sense of a book allowing easy reference, often in a dictionary style, to individual characters, poems, plots, contextual 'background' and the explication of allusions. Rather, it consists of topic-based essays commissioned from 'established specialists' intended to 'cover all the important aspects' of Wordsworth. The title *Wordsworth's Spots of Time*, and indeed the video format, suggest a much more selective approach, though its provenance and the use of 'leading scholars' to discuss Wordsworth's texts and 'analyse key concepts in his poetry in an historical context' demonstrate a comparable ambition.

Although more restricted in scope, the film has the potential to bring to life the landscapes the poet knew and the sounds of his poetry. Most of the video would suit a general audience or those at the beginning of Wordsworth study. I gave it a test drive on second- and third-year undergraduates who had already completed an introductory course on Romanticism which included the *Lyrical Ballads*, and they found much of the material already familiar. Its approach and content are similar to what proves useful for non-specialist American summer school teaching in Britain. Its scholarly solidity is most apparent in material hived off into the coda, in which James Butler talks about textual variation in manuscripts, especially those of *The Ruined Cottage*. This develops the frequent shots of manuscripts in the main body of the film, an instructive insight for

students increasingly untrained in reading handwriting.

The *Companion* would be more use to the reader wishing to develop his or her Wordsworth studies at advanced undergraduate level or beyond. Joel Pace's 'Wordsworth and America: reception and reform' appears designed for a transatlantic market, but this clear and engaging chapter performs the difficult and universally useful task of establishing the political effect of Wordsworth's poetry. Lucy Newlyn's "'The noble living and the noble dead': community in *The Prelude*" is more like a conference paper than an introduction to a set category. It is stimulating but tendentious in its argumentative sleights of hand. The model for the poem is said to be conversion narrative (p. 56), but this proposition is then undermined rather than supported.

One of the main objections to this collection in fact centres on Newlyn's essay. It is not difficult to argue that the early Wordsworth was not really a Christian, but the claim that 'Wordsworth's is a secular vision' (p. 55) needs a more thorough and precise examination of the evidence than is attempted by any of the contributors. Pace is in the minority here in seeing Wordsworth as important in a religious context, yet the debates about him among his own contemporaries and ours need airing. There is no chapter on religion, a surprising omission in its own terms and in terms of other Cambridge Companions, such as that on Austen, from whose published texts actual spirituality is conspicuously absent, whereas one of Wordsworth's key words is 'blessed'. Critics who are themselves the product of a secular age find it all too easy to colonise Wordsworth ideologically, which does not assist 'the post-Christian, urbanized readership' (p. 3) in overcoming a key gap between our time and the poet's. As R. E. Brantley observes in *Wordsworth's Natural Methodism*, they tend to 'overlook the theological content

of the earlier poetry and to be triumphantly impatient with it in the later' (pp. 1-2).

Is the answer, then, to recuperate Wordsworth through eco-criticism? Ralph Pite is an understandable choice as the key contributor to the book here, whereas Jonathan Bate handles this question in the film, and, indeed, its main section ends with the debt of modern ecological thinkers to Wordsworth. The texts agree that nature is important not so much for itself but as a key model for and factor in psychological and social relations. Of the two, the video gives more space to a traditional stress on landscape and the natural world. However, even while it acknowledges that the poem commonly called 'Tintern Abbey' is not about the building, but a spot some miles away, the camera focuses on the abbey. The *Companion* also fudges issues in this area. James Butler repeats the old Marxist chestnut that Wordsworth does not write about 'the industrialisation and grinding poverty around the Abbey' and says that the speaker in 'The Daffodils' is 'as remote from the natural world as is a cloud' (p. 51); what sort of cloud would this be? Mainstream conservationists may not recognise themselves in Pite's characterisation of them.

There is a little overlap between the eminent contributors to the two texts; James Butler and Keith Hanley feature in both. Nevertheless, no one buying both will feel s/he has paid twice for the same thing. In the film, Professor Butler's contribution is marked by a focus on manuscripts and by some sensitive reading of some of the poetry, whereas Professor Hanley develops a challenging if overstated argument that the 'spots of time' are 'mostly' or even 'all' about 'transgression and guilt'. In the book, they offer substantial and detailed bread-and-butter chapters on, respectively, Wordsworth's poetry 1798-1807 and a guide to textual issues and further reading.

Introductory material includes a chronology and extracts from Wordsworth's views on imagination. Other chapters on Wordsworth's career are Nicola Trott's instructive contrasts between 'radical and reactionary Wordsworths', Kenneth Johnston's discussion of the composition of *The Recluse*, and Duncan Wu's account of the poetry up to 1798. This last is another of the pieces that raises quibbles in the reader's mind. There are sloppy assumptions about pantheism here, as elsewhere in the book. The line 'From [s]till small voices heard on every side' is said on page 25 to be 'pure Wordsworth' (no input from I Kings xix, then?). On the secular side, soldiers are said to be recruited by press-gangs (p. 29). Susan Wolfson offers some sharp analysis in 'Wordsworth's craft'.

The remaining six chapters cover the poet's relation to his times. Among them, the editor, Stephen Gill, offers an elegant and discriminating study of how far 'philosophical aspiration was integral to Wordsworth's sense of his poetic vocation' (p. 143). Nicholas Roe provides a useful summary of new material on Wordsworth's life and politics, arguing, after David Bromwich, that the staged trial of French anti-Revolutionaries in 1793, for an assassination that never took place, shaped the way in which Wordsworth connected 'dread' and 'love'.

The video focuses on the psychological complexity of Wordsworth, his humanism and support of the dispossessed, and insists on the musicality of his verse. Unfortunately, this is less apparent from the 'Wordsworth' voiceovers. The use of a local accent is a brave and appropriate choice for a poet who rhymes 'waters' and 'chatters', but the readings are flat, with little sense of either meaning or phrasing. Visually, too, the choice of sepia for scenes from Wordsworth's boyhood is a good idea but actually disappointing. It gives an over-quaint effect, and the frequent focus-pulling is disruptive. A

golden opportunity to demonstrate the topographical geometry of the boat-stealing episode that forms the opening sequence is lost, partly by having the rower glance behind him all the time rather than adopting his viewpoint more. The music is unnecessary. Overall, though, the map and location shots identify places significant to Wordsworth within and beyond the Lake District, and resist the temptation of heritage industry lushness. Sally Bushell provides workmanlike and informative links between contributions from five other scholars.

The film touches accessibly on substantial issues and although it does not excite it bears repetition well. Readers are more likely to find themselves at issue with this *Companion* than with some others on Romantic writers in the series. Objections range from the trivial and typographical (Kipling's most famous poem as 'It') to the more serious issues of recuperation as colonisation discussed above. In spite of the real solidity of much of the material, it is thus not so much an indispensable first-choice study guide as a book to be valued for constant reference to individual chapters and discussion points.

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**Wolfram Schmidgen, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 266. £45. ISBN 0521817021.**

The current vogue for situating Romanticism at the latter end of the long eighteenth century has foregrounded the impact of two very different cultural phenomena – debates about the politics of politeness and the ongoing influence of civic humanism and landed wealth – on the major preoccupations of the Romantic period. Our growing sense of the impact of these phenomena, each of which implied a particular nexus of assumptions

about individual and collective identity, has enriched our understanding of the quarrels which erupted in the wake of the French Revolution by highlighting a complex discursive inheritance which helped to define the revolutionary debates, but which their polarised nature frequently eclipsed. Prominent amongst them was the thorny issue of 'the demon of property', as Mary Wollstonecraft referred to it (p. 155). A series of recent books such as April London's *Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* and Miranda Burgess's *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order 1740-1830* has traced the evolution of debates about property over the century. Like London and Burgess, Wolfram Schmidgen's *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property* concentrates on changing ideas about the links between property, the law and competing notions of community, or what he calls the 'profound, ongoing cultural dialogue about property which was shaping the communal imagination of eighteenth-century Britain' (p. 10).

Schmidgen's emphasis is on the embattled nature of Britain's *communal* imagination as Britain adapted itself to the impact of a commercial revolution that went far beyond economic issues to broader ethical and epistemological challenges imposed by an often alienating sense of cultural modernity. He focuses on landed property, not 'as the curious remnant of an older world, but as the most characteristic figure of eighteenth-century Britain's long history of objectification' (p. 8). The manor house offered a vision of the unity of property with localised social relations which, ironically, became all the more influential on a discursive level as it declined as an empirical reality. The tensions generated by this irony are the main subject of Schmidgen's book. Like London and Burgess, he approaches these broader economic and cultural issues by way of the novel because literature's 'special figurative potential' enables it to capture the often fraught nature of these

debates (p. 3). His argument advances by way of a series of highly nuanced and suggestive readings of particular novels, from *Robinson Crusoe* to *Waverley*, which are illuminated by his careful engagement with a range of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century commentators such as Edward Coke, Matthew Hale, William Blackstone, Edmund Burke and Adam Smith. Schmidgen's central text is *Robinson Crusoe*, and, in particular, Crusoe's 'secret kind of pleasure' in possessing his island 'as completely as any lord of a manor in England' (p. 42). Rather than read Defoe as an apostle of modernity, articulating the conditions for a new credit-driven social order, Schmidgen treats him as central example of the pre-modern ideological world that was eighteenth-century Britain, with its inherited notions of social deference and custom. The book's central chapter returns to the novel, this time reading Crusoe's 'lengthy and detailed lists' of recovered possessions as evidence of the irrelevance of Marx's theorisation of the commodity fetish to what, Schmidgen suggests, was still a mercantile economy free of the social abstractions that underpinned Marx's equation of commodity fetishism with the autonomous world of exchange value (p. 107).

Having forcefully distanced himself from critics such as Michael McKeon who align the rise of the novel with the advent of 'modern notions of objectification', Schmidgen goes on to demonstrate the ways that generic shifts in the novel form reflected a dawning recognition of the practical irrelevance of this premodern emphasis on the primacy of landed wealth with its associated mercantile priorities (p. 134). Sentimental novels such as *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) and *The Man of Feeling* (1771) privileged concentrated moments of private drama, or 'sentimental commerce' as Yorick calls it, which were at odds with 'the wide landscape' of mercantilism's emphasis on the productive force of circulation (p. 143).

Ann Radcliffe's evocation of 'Gothic claustrophobia' exposed and implicitly critiqued the ideological conservatism of social codes grounded in the certainties of landed wealth (p. 172). Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, the end point of Schmidgen's historical narrative, celebrates the communal vision of the landed estate but only by enshrining the idea of it as a kind of 'museum' whose attractiveness is bound up with its practical distance from the demands of modern Scottish society (p. 211). Inevitably, an historical narrative which is simultaneously so ambitious and so tidy risks simplifying the very cultural complexities which it is Schmidgen's project to recover. It necessarily leaves out as much as it includes in its account of the triumph of new forms of personal, political and national identity. And the very dexterity of its critical readings sometimes creates its own questions: can Robinson Crusoe's lists of goods really support the ambitious theoretical argument which Schmidgen rests on them? Does the sentimental novel's predilection for intensely private moments really hail the triumph of the modern capitalist spirit over mercantilism's emphasis on circulation? And can the trope of circulation be quite so thoroughly aligned with mercantilism to begin with? These sorts of uncertainties, however, are the inevitable consequence of a provocative study which addresses some of today's most urgent theoretical and historical debates by way of insightful literary analyses.

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**Robert Mayer (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Fiction on Screen*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 240. £47.50. ISBN 0521793165.**

Although the fraught question of the 'faithfulness' of a screen adaptation to a literary text is central to this volume, the

collection nevertheless succeeds in advancing a variety of convincing and innovative theoretical alternatives to a 'fidelity model' of criticism which, as Mayer's introduction suggests, has tended to privilege the literary work and to judge the cinematic adaptation in terms of the 'accuracy' of its translation of the text to the screen. What unites the diverse critical perspectives of the contributors to this volume is the understanding that each adaptation enacts a reading of the literary text that has its own cultural specificity and distinct aesthetic consciousness and that cannot be critiqued adequately in terms of 'truthfulness' to a privileged literary original.

Several of the essays identify the importance to film of the spectacle – the 'fetishisation of the image', as Peter Cosgrove puts it – as a productive site of difference between text and film. Cosgrove's detailed analysis of the importance of historical spectacle to screen adaptations of Fielding contends that film's necessary prioritisation of the image over such textual concerns as interiority, subjectivity and 'story' detaches film adaptations from any responsibility to their source text which might be theorised in terms of fidelity to textual detail and literary technique. Invoking visual analogy as the key to successful screen adaptation, Martin C. Battestin's analysis of Fielding on screen stresses also the extent to which reliance upon spectacle both constrains and expands the creative possibilities of adaptation. For Cynthia Wall, meanwhile, the cinematic utilisation of movement, space and lighting in the BBC's adaptation of *Clarissa* produces a powerful translation on to screen of Richardson's text which remains faithful to the novel's thematic and narrative concerns even as it re-contextualises and reworks them.

The power of the image is central to the volume's two analyses of adaptations of Diderot: Santelli's *Jacques, Le Fataliste*

(1984) and Rivette's *La Religieuse* (1966). Focusing upon the interplay of mimesis and diegesis in Diderot's *Jacques, Le Fataliste*, arguably its least translatable feature, Alan J. Singerman analyses Santelli's innovative use of visual narrative techniques to translate the metafictional qualities of Diderot's text and to query the very status of the film as cinematic fiction. The adaptation becomes metacinematic, thus achieving a certain fidelity to Diderot whilst at the same time interrogating the notion of what 'fidelity' might mean in the context of the cinematic adaptation of fictional works. The subversive potency of spectacle, meanwhile, orients Kevin Jackson's re-evaluation of Rivette's controversial adaptation of *La Religieuse* towards a consideration of whether, and why, cinema might be a medium with such a capacity to shock that even a relatively tame treatment of a potentially subversive subject is likely to attract the censor's attention. From this perspective, twentieth-century cinema could be seen to emerge as the cultural equivalent of the eighteenth-century novel in its perceived capacity to shock, inflame and dislocate its audience and the status of film as the site of struggle over meaning, expression and the public consumption of narratives raises further vital issues for the critic of cinematic adaptations of eighteenth-century fictions.

The question of censorship in the context of film adaptations of texts considered culturally dangerous in the eighteenth century is radically reworked by Alan D. Chalmers who contends that cinematic adaptation might in certain instances enact a fresh censorship of the literary original. The 1993 television adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels*, argues Chalmers, amounts to an ideological re-writing of Swift which represents Gulliver as an entirely trustworthy, sympathetic upholder of Enlightenment values. In so doing, the adaptation robs the text of its critical force and could be said to repeat

the censorial gestures of earlier generations of critics of Swift. Chalmers' essay points to the dangers of a complacent disavowal of the notion of fidelity in film criticism, for what infidelity amounts to in this adaptation is not a liberatory reworking of the original, but a denial of its subversive power. A similar point could be drawn from Catherine N. Parke's interrogation of the effacement from three twentieth-century adaptations of *Moll Flanders* of certain details of the life of Defoe's protagonist. Whilst they differ markedly in terms of their representations of Moll, each film omits certain aspects of Moll's experience in a manner which suggests an attempt to deproblematise Moll's gendered subjectivity. Parke relates this censoring of Moll's experience to her status as an invention of the male author/director and opens up a space for the reconceptualisation of Moll from a feminist directorial perspective.

It is an understanding of cinematic adaptation in terms of a creative re-visioning of eighteenth-century fictions, rather than a 'faithful' translation of them, which underscores the majority of contributions to this collection. Representations of eighteenth-century libertinism in Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* become the vehicle, in Roger Vadim's 1960 adaptation, for a critique of mid-twentieth sexual and artistic constraints and, in Stephen Frears' 1988 version, for a critical engagement with aspects of 1980s English culture in general and of Thatcherite ideology in particular. Postmodern concerns with the unstable, shifting boundaries of the self are powerfully articulated, Margaret McCarthy argues, through Wender's road movie adaptation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister (Wrong Move)*, 1974) in a manner which pushes to a postmodern extreme Goethe's vision of the fragile subject of early modernity constantly on the move. Again, McCarthy invokes the importance of spectacle and spatial metaphor in the

cinematic treatment of the ontological concerns of eighteenth-century fiction.

Mayer's volume is a timely intervention into literary and film studies which itself re-visions not only the relation between film and fiction, but also the relation between early modernity and postmodernity. As Mayer's own contribution suggests, the very notion of 'post-ness' – of following on from and creatively re-visioning the past – appears central to the process of adapting for a twentieth-century cinema audience the fictions of early modernity. It is central also to this collection's creative approach to fiction, film and 'fidelity criticism'.

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**John Goodridge (gen. ed.), Simon Kövesi (ass. gen. ed.) and David Fairer (advisory ed.), *Eighteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets 1700–1800*. 3 vols. Vol. I, 1700-1740, ed. William Christmas; Vol. II, 1740-1780, ed. Bridget Keegan; Vol. III, 1780-1800, ed. Tim Burke. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003. Pp. 1288. £275. ISBN 1851967583.**

This collection reinvents the 'specimens' anthology of the romantic era, the three-volume chronological arrangement of poems from hard-to-find volumes illustrated by biographical and critical prefaces. The original anthologies, organised by period, gender or region, were often goldmines of information and did much to establish the canon of minor poets. While several writers included here appeared in them, no specimens anthology was devoted specifically to labouring-class writers. As with those pioneering forays, the challenge confronting John Goodridge and his team of editors has been to identify neglected poems representative of their class and of interest to contemporary readers, illustrating them with information and anecdote about the

writers. The challenge has been met with all the success that might reasonably be hoped for, and a vast new territory opened up for critics and literary historians to ponder. An additional three volumes are in the works for nineteenth-century poets.

Although labourers had always composed poems it was not until the advent of Stephen Duck in the 1730s that they began to appear in significant numbers, and of Robert Burns in the 1780s that labouring poetry as such began to be accorded literary status. The number of labourers, artisans and servants publishing verse in the eighteenth century runs into the hundreds; while there are fewer to whom biographical particulars can be attached, the sixty writers collected here do not exhaust that group by any means. Some were celebrities, others left anthology pieces, many were not known beyond a small circle of acquaintances. While they are a diverse lot with respect to occupation, social background, opinions, knowledge, skill and literary ambition, their stories are almost always compelling. A small core of these poets made their lives and labours the focus of their verse.

From this collection we learn that labouring-class writers, on the whole, were much like everyone else: they were anxious about morality and religion, money, love and status. In style and sentiment their poetry resembles that of amateur poets drawn from whatever walk of life. The ratio of poets to versifiers among labouring writers was much the same as in other demographic groups; while the characteristic failings of autodidact verse are sometimes in evidence (prolixity, formlessness, bland generalisation) these writers are not semi-literates. They generally model themselves on the popular poets of the present and preceding generation, Pope and Thomson being particular favourites. Most of the poems collected here appeared in volumes destined for patrons, subscribers or general readers. While one can observe, fitfully at first, the beginnings of class

consciousness, its full development had to wait until labouring-class poets began addressing their peers upon matters of common concern, which happens only late in the century. An anthology drawing more heavily on anonymous ballads, broadsheets and periodical verse would have a different character.

The general tone is reflected in the three representative figures singled out by the editors. In the first volume (1700-1740), edited by William Christmas, Stephen Duck strives for politeness by learning to polish his periods; in the second (1740-1780), edited by Bridget Keegan, James Woodhouse strives for taste through access to William Shenstone's garden and library, while in the third (1780-1800), edited by Tim Burke, Ann Yearsley strives for power by insisting on financial independence and control over her texts. Labouring writers thus participated in the broader literary movements of their times, though under circumstances peculiar to themselves. Many changes, happy or tragic, were rung on the personal histories of Duck, Woodhouse and Yearsley. The highlight of the first volume is the editor's discovery of a whole group of poems written in emulation of Duck's 'Thresher's Labour' (Robert Tattersal is especially moving). Keegan presents a clutch of cobbler-poets; I share her enthusiasm for Woodhouse, who of all sixty poets seems most in need of serious attention. Burke deserves plaudits for including both sides of the ideological spectrum: Edward Rushton's clarion-call to conscience juxtaposed with James Walker's unabashed defence of the slave trade (we also discover that Yearsley's politics could be as high as her verse was tumid).

Sound editorial principles have been followed, contextual introductions are supplied for each volume, and references to names, places and events are thoroughly annotated. The fact that the canon and history of working-class poetry are far from settled has led to occasional

dilemmas. One is uneven chronological distribution: because most of this poetry was published in the final two decades of the century, selections in the first and third volumes suffer by offering, respectively, too much and too little. Irish poets appear in all three volumes, American poets in none. No Scottish writers appear in the first, in the second they get headnotes but not poems, while in the third they occupy a prominent place. Some fairly well-known writers might also have been included: the pen-cutter Moses Browne (beginning the natural history series), the provincial printer Thomas Gent (beginning the antiquary series), the provincial actor John Cunningham (excellent pastoral ballads), and, in the later era, William Hamilton Reid ('The English Burns'), the Jacobitical Andrew Macdonald, and the Jacobinical John Thelwall. No doubt much had to be left on the cutting-room floor. The strength of this pioneering anthology is its attention to individual writers; the biographical research is uniformly impressive, and the editors generously reprint prefatory matter from the original volumes.

In his terse, elegant introduction, John Goodridge speaks of labouring-class poetry as a 'category' and a 'tradition'. These are terms worth pondering. In the eighteenth century, the category-term was not 'labouring' but 'unlettered'. The distinction matters if we are to grasp the expectations of poets who saw themselves as persons-on-the-rise and readers who regarded labouring writers as less members of a class than exceptional geniuses. Both designations tend to exclude a significant group of 'lettered labourers', poets like Samuel Boyse and John Huddleston Wynne who wrote for a living and were among the poorest of the poor. 'Tradition' also raises issues that need to be dealt with. While there was an unbroken sequence of writers, tradition in the sense of an identifiable mode or manner proves elusive. Allan Ramsay left a literary school behind him; Stephen

Duck set an example for others to emulate. We need to know more about practices of imitation among autodidacts; what has been derided as inauthentic may prove the authentic basis for a labouring aesthetic (artisans *did* work from patterns). The 'specimens' approach is not very helpful in this respect: one would not realise that Elizabeth Bentley created a whole *oeuvre* out of Milton's 'Il Penseroso', or sense the breadth and intensity of the labouring-class response to Gray, Shenstone and Goldsmith.

What is clear is that labouring poets assembled abundant materials from which later writers could develop their own traditions about untutored inspiration, rural felicity, suffering genius, the dignity (or indignity) of labour, radical dissent, local poetry, folkways, religion and nationality. It has been easier to view the work of Duck and his early successors through the lens of nineteenth-century traditions than to see it on its own terms, which as often as not value civility more than authenticity. With the publication of this landmark anthology we now have a much more complex field of poets, poems, genres, traditions and categories to work with, nor is the sequel likely to simplify matters. But the work of interpretation and re-evaluation can now proceed on a firmer empirical basis.

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**Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend*. John Murray, 2002. Pp. 674. £25. ISBN 071955621X.**

**Jane Stabler, *Byron, Poetics and History*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 251. £40. ISBN 0521812410.**

**Stephen Cheeke, *Byron and Place: History, Translation, Nostalgia*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. 241. £47.50. ISBN 1403904030.**

*Byron: Life and Legend* is the third major biography of Byron to have been published in eight years. Flagging readers, however, have been pulverised into submission by the formidable publicity machine which went into action on its publication. This juggernaut consisted of an exhibition and programme of talks at the National Portrait Gallery last year, curated by its author, Fiona MacCarthy; the BBC 1 documentary of November 2002 in which she took a prominent part; and the glossy two-part mini-series starring Jonny Lee Miller broadcast in Autumn 2003 flagged up by numerous titillating trailers. Jane Tranter, BBC Controller of Drama Commissioning, defined the aim of the latter as 'to explore what it meant to be a sex-god aristo', and the promotional leaflet for MacCarthy's NPG exhibition patronised the public in equal measure by making a spurious link between the Regency 'superstar' Lord Byron dying in the Greek revolution and the iconic status of Che Guevara in the 1960s. The BBC chose to intersperse talking-head academics in its documentary with clips from daft biopics of yesteryear, to somewhat surreal effect.

All this force-feeding of Byron-lite is a little nauseating especially when it comes from an intelligent biographer such as MacCarthy. She is much too good a writer and researcher not to have produced a perfectly decent book, of course, but those attracted to it by the cynically sensationalist advertising will be sadly disappointed for they will learn nothing new about Byron's sex life. Despite MacCarthy's claims to originality in foregrounding the poet's attraction to boys, Byron's bisexuality has actually been in the public domain for thirty years. It was documented in Leslie Marchand's 1973 edition of the letters; discussed in Doris Langley Moore's *Lord Byron: Accounts Rendered* (1974); and was the subject of a scholarly monograph by Louis Crompton in 1985. By taking issue with Doris Langley Moore's contention that his

affairs with women were Byron's main emotional focus during most of his life, MacCarthy makes a rod for her own back. For Byron's affairs with boys seem mainly to have occurred in his youth, except for an unrequited passion for his page during the Greek revolution. So it is with an obvious effort that MacCarthy keeps asserting the supposed relevance of Byron's homosexuality to events between his homecoming from his grand tour in 1811 and his return to Greece in 1823: in other words, most of his writing life. For example, after describing the 'infidelity' or freethinking of the biblical play *Cain* being denounced from the pulpits, MacCarthy makes the perplexing observation: 'The accusations of sodomy are not far from the surface' (p. 415). When describing the impact of Shelley's death on Byron, she must drag in Oscar Wilde's bizarre speculation that the poets' relationship had cooled because Byron had tried to seduce his friend, even while conceding how unconvincing this idea was (p. 429).

MacCarthy makes much of the fact that she has not worked under the restrictions imposed on Leslie Marchand by Sir John Murray, then head of the publishing firm, who would not countenance 'any plain statements drawn from the evidence in those matters' (p. xii) of sex in Marchand's classic three-volume *Life* of 1957. For John Murray have commissioned MacCarthy's biography, opened their archives to her and in the twenty-first century not only countenance the facts but presumably welcome an emphasis on sexuality. In this their last flagship production before the family business, founded in 1768, was bought up by Hodder Headline in May 2003, Murray perhaps wanted to make amends by erasing the memory of the prurience which had led the firm to prioritise the protection of its own respectability over respect for Byron's wishes by burning his memoirs in the grate at Albemarle Street.

What would have been more interesting than the old prurience covered in a sensationalist coating, would have been for MacCarthy to have used the Murray archive to document the strategy of the business partnership between Byron and Murray which produced the publishing phenomenon unique in English literature in which a poem could sell 10,000 copies on the first day of publication. It would be equally fascinating to have the inside story of its dissolution when, to Murray's chagrin, Byron had his later works published by the radical Hunt brothers. But MacCarthy is not interested in the writing or the forces behind its production. She dismisses Byron's early verse as 'wishy-washy love poems'. She parrots patronising clichés left over from the days of high modernism that his poetry is 'grossly uneven in quality, his thought processes slipshod' (p. xiv). It is only as 'the man of experience' who has lived through terrible excesses, or as the instigator of a fashionable cult, that Byron deserves to be remembered at all. So we must wait for Andrew Nicholson's forthcoming edition of John Murray's letters to Byron for a fuller understanding of the publishing of Byron. Meanwhile, this biography is a sparkling, meticulously researched account of Lord Byron the historical personage. Despite the fact that we know the story all too well, MacCarthy still manages to surprise us with unexpected details and unusual quotations to illuminate the characters amongst whom he moved. Its partial success serves to remind us what an opportunity has been missed in this mismatch between an able biographer and her slippery subject, who has escaped once more from the net while she was looking the wrong way.

The distance between MacCarthy's lack of interest in Byron's poetry and the respectful treatment of it by today's young scholars is a measure of the datedness of much literary biography, in this case lagging over thirty years behind the reevaluation instigated by Jerome McGann

and Robert Gleckner in the 1960s. Jane Stabler pays particular attention to the early verse and to neglected satires such as *Hints from Horace* and *The Age of Bronze* in a painstaking study of the tension between literary convention and digression which informed Byron's poetics throughout his career. Following the lead of critics such as Stuart Curran, Susan Wolfson and William Keach, she employs a formalist approach which pays historicist attention to the reception of poems in their own day as well as the reading process as we experience it now.

'When a man talks of system, his case is hopeless' remarked Byron, and Stabler follows him here, admitting she has no overarching thesis: her commentary provides only local, particular insights. This does not make for a lively book, but Stabler's detailed readings provide additional support for our growing awareness of the constant artistic experimentation belied by Byron's dilettante pose. Stabler defines digression broadly: concentrating not on deviations from the plot, but on abrupt transitions, instances of 'feminine' caprice or *mobilité* in parenthetical asides, and literary allusions which make up the fine texture of verse calculated to seduce yet unsettle the contemporary reader. Her study grounds Byron's satiric techniques in the reconfiguration of the work of Charles Churchill, Matthew Prior and Laurence Sterne, as well as in recurrent attempts to adapt Popean heroic couplets to liberal politics.

Chapter five is the most interesting part of the book, where Stabler looks at *Galignani's Messenger* as a source for digressions on current affairs in the English cantos. Her research on his newspaper sources and London correspondents constitutes new and convincing evidence for Byron's up-to-date knowledge of British politics and adoption of radicalism in the 1820s, despite his residence in Italy. Chapter six indicates the importance of Byron's

friendship with the radical Douglas Kinnaird, in the period when he left Murray and was distanced from Hobhouse and Moore by his literary partnership with Leigh Hunt. The book has the distinctly un-Byronic but scholarly virtues of being careful, cautious and unpretentious.

Stephen Cheeke's more important monograph investigates the trope most central to Byron's poetry: that of 'being there' on the very spot – of a ruin or battlefield, for example. The poet's subjectivity is opened up to the reader when ecstatically communing with the past. Byron's 'spots of time', like Wordsworth's, could also be re-experienced by a tourist *in situ*. With *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as indispensable to a nineteenth-century traveller as a Murray guidebook, access was granted to historical experiences associated with famous places, while Byron's own presence there was simultaneously recreated. This is to state the obvious, but Cheeke draws on contemporary cultural theories which ground subjectivity in the spatial and temporal to analyse the palimpsests produced by the poet's situated embodiment. He asserts that Byron's poetry neither proclaims Wordsworthian transcendence of the material nor a scepticism oppositional to it, but explores the philosophical relation between the materiality of geo-history and the mysterious supernatural of the *genius loci*. In other words Byron recreates the religious concept of pilgrimage for the modern age, visiting historical sites to imaginatively recreate human heroism and to ponder its survival into the present.

Cheeke's approach is to examine the poetry together with the life, and, while his book contains no startling revaluations, it provides solid detailed evidence of a linked preoccupation with the inspiration of place and the meaning of exile throughout the poet's career. Influenced by Nigel Leask's fine analysis of Byron's anxieties of empire, the first

part of the book shows how, from the outset, Byron was anxious to record the places where his poetry was composed, yet was unwilling to be identified with Britain's imperialists and avaricious antiquarians. He distanced himself from classical connoisseurship by his commitment to the here and now in caustic notes to orientalist verse tales set in the recent past. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* he often let the landscape dictate the poem to him as amanuensis, rather than using it merely as a mirror of his own mind. Though viewing 'the *real Parnassus*' proved comically disappointing, nevertheless it authenticated Philhellenist desire as uniting the ideal with the mundanity of the real.

Cheeke notes the Protestant aesthetic values with which Byron and Hobhouse scrutinised the battlefields, epitaphs and memorials of the Napoleonic wars, but no Catholic peasant could rival Byron's intense fascination for collecting the most bizarre of relics and souvenirs (especially the bones of warriors, hair of lovers). This desire for material authentication of the fled spirit was intensified by the extinguishing of the French republican ideal in 1815. The third canto of *Childe Harold* turned for inspiration to the pure spirit of love inhabiting the environs of Rousseau's Clarens, while *Manfred* and *The Prisoner of Chillon* explored the consolatory idea of the self-sufficiency of the mind as its own place free from the determining forces of situation.

Cheeke is especially strong on this period of Byron's writing life when he was exploring the concept of nationhood and the meaning of exile in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* and *The Lament of Tasso*. He applies to Byron the seriousness scholars usually reserve for Wordsworth in tracing the poet's philosophy of the spirit of place. Byron adopted an almost bardic role in memorialising national cultures and mystically communing with the spirits of the dead. Cheeke gives a

refreshing emphasis on the quasi-religious nature of the earlier poetry which enthused Byron's original readership, and is now often neglected in favour of the scepticism of the *ottava rima* burlesques.

The second half of the book is less convincing. Though Cheeke achieves coherence by following through the theme of place in tracing Byron's ambivalent acculturation in Italian society, and his 'pathology of nostalgia' in the English cantos of *Don Juan*, he thereby produces a backward-looking poet fixated on English Whiggism of the 1790s. This was indeed the period in which the story of Norman Abbey was set, but, as Stabler's research has demonstrated, Byron made sure his narrator's topical references were up to date despite his own pose of having 'gone native'. Cheeke gives the preface to cantos six to eight as his prime example of Byron's 'datedness'. But Byron composed this just when the leading radical journalist of the day had arrived from London to help him set up his own journal. Leigh Hunt was hardly out of touch. By alluding to the 'wretched infidel' Richard Carlile, languishing in Dorchester gaol for six years for selling *The Age of Reason* (admittedly a 1790s text!), Byron's preface acknowledged that the publication of *Don Juan* by the Hunts instead of John Murray was a significant moment in the campaign for reform. For it signalled that the Romantic poet was making common cause with the radical propagandists in the campaign for freedom of speech.

This soft-peddling of Byron's increasing radicalism is perhaps a misguided attempt to make him seem more Wordsworthian. More disturbing is the Britain-centred insularity of approach which results in a monograph on the meaning of place having no reference in the index to Herder, no consideration of *sturm und drang* and German Romanticism. Nevertheless, both Stabler and Cheeke have produced intelligent well-written monographs which are

immensely heartening in that they see no need to justify treating Byron seriously as a major poet, and so busy are they analysing his poetics and philosophy respectively that they have no time to spare for his celebrity or his sex-life.

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