

Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 332. £45.00. ISBN 0521834561.

Ian Haywood's expansive, richly detailed history of late Georgian and early Victorian popular literature charts the transformation of the genre from the unornamented radical political pamphlets and satirical plebeian miscellanies of the 1790s to the lurid 'penny bloods' and mass-circulation fiction of the 1840s to the 'journals of popular progress' of the 50s and 60s. The whole is unified by the thesis that radical politics played a decisive and continuing role in the development of the form, an argument that sheds new light on some neglected popular genres and texts: the 'pig's meat' anthology, the female-authored didactic tale, and Chartist fiction.

The survey is structured chronologically into three parts. Part I opens with the Revolution controversy of the 1790s which saw the radical eighteenth-century notion of 'popular sovereignty' form the basis of a 'plebeian counter-public sphere' and a new political aesthetic of 'plainer' and 'coarser' language (evident in the works of Tom Paine) alongside the 'dialogic strategies' of the cheap 'pig's meat' miscellany-cum-anthology, combining political and moral essay with satire and skits of various kinds. Haywood argues that the mounting counter-revolutionary pressure of loyalist propaganda forced a split between popular literature and 'bourgeois "Romantic" radicals such as Godwin and Coleridge' (6). His stress throughout is on putting texts back into the context of radical print culture, thereby highlighting what he sees as the "'Romantic" rejection of the plebeian public sphere' (39). By the same means, Hannah More (the subject of a number of recent feminist revisionist histories) is described as more politically reactionary than her sympathisers suggest and the bulk of chapter 3 is devoted to a reassessment of More's intervention in the revolution controversy. To call More a 'revolutionary reformer' (Anne Mellor) or to credit her with 'a woman's brand of bourgeois progressivism' (Mitzi Myers) is according to Haywood to over-rate the 'feminocentric' quality of her writing and the challenge it poses to the traditional bases of society. Positive female

agency, he points out, is in short supply in the Cheap Repository Tracts and even if they are read as 'woman-determined texts' this is not incompatible with More's conservative political and social ideology. Haywood will not have it that More was in any sense a 'crypto-feminist' or 'crypto-liberal' and no doubt is entitled to say so in the context of his study of radical culture. However, the feminist scholarship of Mellor and Myers deserves credit for raising the profile of the most widely read woman writer of her age and rescuing her from the neglect into which she fell at the hands of feminist readers in the 1970s offended by her political conservatism.

Part II follows the trajectory of popular literature from the clampdown on radicalism in the late 1790s to the popular unstamped press of the 1820s and 30s, arguing that the period witnessed a significant overlap between popular forms of reading pleasure and radical literature. Haywood demonstrates that the Jacobin periodical tradition gradually merged into popular cultural forms, namely, 'cheap fiction, sensational reportage and the visual stimulation of the cheap woodcut' (6). And he develops the illuminating thesis that 'the real significance of the unstamped press was its embracing of popular, often sensational forms of reading pleasure which enhanced rather than diminished its radical appeal. It was this legacy which proved so influential for the Chartist press of the 1840s' (6).

Part III takes the story into the Victorian period, focussing on Chartist literature and the evolution of a new popular liberal press in which women writers and gender politics enjoyed increasing visibility. However, women get a rough deal in the seminal Chartist tale Thomas Doubleday's *Political Pilgrim's Progress* (1839), which offers proof, if any were needed, that radical politics do not always chime with political correctness. Doubleday's text is steeped in a sexist and indeed a racist ideology: 'Its patriarchal construction of the artisan family is complemented by a narrow nationalism. The loyal silent wife is almost as marginalised as the distant, oppressed blacks. Radical dismisses Mr Cant Humanity's concern for West Indian slavery as pious hypocrisy: "I postpone my interest in black people two thousand miles off"' (153). Rabid anti-semitism is a further unsavoury feature of this Chartist

radical fiction, which constructs ignoble racial caricatures out of an analysis of capitalism.

The appeal of nationalism acquires a more amenable aspect in the romances of Ernest Jones, whose serialised novels assimilate the traditional literary genre of the national tale in titles such as *The Maid of Warsaw* (1855). That said, it was the less respectable popularisers of literature, primarily Edward Lloyd and George W. M. Reynolds, who made the biggest splash in Chartist circles with their highly successful mixture of sensational, libidinal stories and radical politics. To their opponents, such as the staunch moralist Charles Knight, their popularity was evidence of the deplorable innate licentiousness of the common reader. Against this interpretation, Haywood proposes a revaluation of the political efficacy of sensationalism and populism: ‘Sensationalism was only one of the means they [Lloyd and Reynolds] used to animate, engage and “improve” their readers’ (162). He also argues that Reynolds’s journals overlap with the polite and Chartist periodical in their inclusion of stories about the oppression of female workers, most particularly the plight of the needlewoman.

Haywood’s narrative concludes with the counter-offensive launched by publishers of respectable middle-class journals, such as Dickens’s *Household Words*, which lampooned Reynolds and included some explicitly anti-Chartist propaganda. At the same time the abolition of stamp duty in 1855 heralded the decline of the radical popular press. But anxieties about the habits of the common reader continued to vex Victorian educators and publishers, who carried forward ‘the mission to correct “false social and political teaching”’ (242). Haywood’s book is the culmination of years spent researching the archives of popular culture and is a work of scholarship, which, like the best of the fictional texts under discussion, is both educational and entertaining. It is heartening to learn that whilst Charles Knight ‘could not accept the fact that a passion for “ghosts” and “murders” could co-exist with the grand march of the intellect’ (2), the producers and consumers of popular fiction could. As a consequence of Haywood’s book, we might too.

Alan D. Vardy, *John Clare, Politics and Poetry*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2003. Pp. 221. £45. ISBN 0333966171.

Identifying a critical tradition of condescending and limiting sympathy for 'poor John Clare', Alan Vardy sets out to describe instead Clare's active responses to the cultural formations surrounding him. He presents an individual with 'clear political and aesthetic views' and 'a powerful integrating mind'. In the first section, on Clare's reception history, he aims in particular at a contextual examination of Clare's language, especially his defence of vernacular speech and dialect. To this end he analyses Clare's resistance to Wordsworthian and Coleridgean aesthetics and situates his editor John Taylor and his early reviewers within the contemporary politics of language and taste. Vardy sees Clare as defending Wordsworth from his developing self, extolling the virtues of close natural observation and spontaneity against the deadening effect of reflection and poetic self-creation. Poetry, he argues, should be the thing itself, the poet disappearing 'in order for the landscape to emerge "unsullied"'. While in Wordsworth's sublime moments perceptual excess tends to be recuperated into personal growth, the obscure natural objects celebrated in Clare's poetry retain an unassimilated value even while prompting a sublime excess of pleasure. Vardy describes this as a consistent principle in Clare's work, an 'ethical refusal to exploit the objects of nature'. Since readers nevertheless engage with Clare's poems on his terms rather than those of the vixen or mouse described (to take two of Vardy's examples here), it would be interesting to consider how those natural objects might be haunted by their textual reproduction. Such a desire risks identifying me with the kind of hybrid of patronage and reading which Vardy later claims was invited by Taylor, in which '[t]he critic or reader could reflect on the meaning of a landscape that Clare artistically supplied.' Surely any reader of any text *can* indeed reflect on meaning or on anything else as wished; but how do the poems go about leading, restricting, encouraging or discouraging those kinds of responses? Clare's poetry is rarely discussed here on a close formal or linguistic level (a

reluctance which becomes explicit refusal: 'The matter of the poems is not formal, and thus the sonnet becomes merely the unit of perception'). A fascinating juxtaposition of Clare's 'The Fate of Amy' with Patrick Brontë's representations of a devout peasantry in fact concentrates almost entirely on the social morals extractable from the pieces, valorising psychological realism and disregarding their aesthetic or formal qualities. The subsequent reading of Clare's 'The Village Funeral', in contrast, is subtle and enlightening (and the poem is the kind of astonishing piece which tends to enliven any work on this most prolific of writers).

The book's second section focuses on the messy details of Clare's literary career, emphasising his constructive role in shaping his relations with his patrons, seeking a range of outlets for publication (with detailed work on the genesis and nature of some of Clare's publications in annuals, periodicals and newspapers, particularly on his imitations), and planning a series of collaborative projects combining the poetry and science of natural history. A final chapter examines Clare's political beliefs as played out in his social and literary interactions, focusing on the Swing riots of December 1830 and January 1831. The thirteen biographies of Clare make for rather crowded territory, although long-running disagreements persist, notably about Clare's alleged political equivocation and about the merits of Taylor's editorial practice. Inevitably, Vardy engages with those two debates (arguing respectively for a politically astute Clare both inspired and provoked by the writings and reputation of Cobbett, and for an initially well-intentioned but disingenuous and morally and physically weak Taylor). He works carefully to make these cases, and is more persuasive in the former, but with a limited amount of new evidence the counter-arguments will require little dusting down. More striking is Vardy's nuanced treatment of two of Clare's apparently conservative acquaintances: Clare's early patron Lord Radstock, and his later correspondent and friend Marianne Marsh (a third, Eliza Emmerson, has yet to inspire such measured treatment). Radstock provides a focus for a fascinating discussion of the self-interested reading practices of Clare's patrons and reviewers, often apparently blind to political sentiments of which they might be expected to disapprove. Later Vardy carefully details Marsh's

sensitivity to the class dynamics of her exchanges with Clare as the two conducted a sustained discussion (aided by Marsh's loan not only of religious texts but also of Cobbett's *Two-penny Trash*) about the Swing riots and the status of the rural poor, a discussion all the more intriguing for the active participation of Marsh's husband – the Bishop of Peterborough – on the most conservative wing of the controversy.

Although this study deals more with correspondence than with poetry it is, inevitably, selective in its treatment of Clare's interpersonal relations, virtually silent for example about the lively provincial culture of Stamford. Among a number of typographical errors, the erratic deployment of prepositions in particular keeps alive the tradition of nonconformist grammar; more disruptive are some traces of incomplete re-organisation (the second chapter at times wanting to precede the first). The book's greatest value for Clare scholars lies, appropriately enough, in its innumerable details and its careful if contestable judgements. Vardy declares at the opening his intention to study the four categories of class, aesthetics, politics and poetry. More sustained attention could usefully have been devoted to the last of these; but what remains is a valuable and detailed survey of some of the crucial (and at times misunderstood) historical conditions of Clare's life and work.

Paul Chirico  
Jesus College, Cambridge

Richard Greene and Ann Messenger, eds., *The Works of Mary Leapor*.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Pp. 358. £89. ISBN 0198182929.

In the ongoing expansion of the canon of eighteenth-century poetry, Mary Leapor has fared well, or at least better than many of her labouring-class peers. Her witty contribution to the tradition of the country house poem, *Crumble Hall*, her sallies within the period's debate about gender roles in poems such as 'Man the Monarch', and her poems detailing the struggles of a labouring-class woman to write, such as 'An Epistle to Artemesia, On Fame',

have all appeared in new or newly-revised anthologies. Yet while these poems are indicative of Leapor's talents, the few poems that recent editors have been able to include give only a partial illustration of the range of Leapor's talents, and of all that she accomplished in her relatively short career. We can be grateful to Richard Greene and the late Ann Messenger for producing a superb modern edition of Leapor's complete works. With the appearance of this accessible single volume, critical interest in Leapor's work will only increase.

Leapor came from very modest circumstances. Her father was a gardener, and as a teenager, she went into service as a kitchen maid. Happily, her first employer, Susanna Jennens, nurtured her talents and likely allowed her access to the Jennens's family library. Leapor's second job, with the Chauncy family (whose home, Edgecote House, serves as the model for Crumble Hall), was less conducive to her writing. In fact, Leapor suggests in 'An Epistle to Artemesia' that her literary ambitions led to her dismissal. After Leapor returned home to her parents, she found the support and patronage of Bridget Freemantle. It was Freemantle who helped bring Leapor's works to publication initially.

Leapor's literary output was limited to two volumes, the first published in 1748, and the second appeared posthumously in 1751. Greene and Messenger have combined these into a single elegant volume, which also includes a useful introductory essay by Greene, as well as thorough and helpful textual notes and annotations. They have reproduced the poems largely in the order in which they originally appeared; the only alteration they have made is to include all of Leapor's dramatic verse in a single section at the end of the volume, and only the usage of quotation marks is modernised. Although Leapor's verse is already quite accessible to a modern reader, the supplemental materials will allow the reader to appreciate more fully the depth of Leapor's knowledge and the extent of her skill. While Leapor's initial popularity can be understood within the vogue for 'natural genius' during the mid-eighteenth-century, twenty-first century readers are likely to be struck by the intelligence and erudition of Leapor's poems. She has a deft ear for the couplet form, and unlike some of her self-taught contemporaries (such as

James Woodhouse), her lines rarely stumble. Pope's influence on her style is obvious and acknowledged. While Leapor might today be categorised as a labouring-class poet, and while her humble origins are an important dimension of her own poetic self-fashioning, readers who now have access to her complete work will come away with a richer understanding of Leapor as a remarkable poet, regardless of her class origin.

What may also strike the reader now able to see Leapor's oeuvre in full is that, alongside her sprightly verse epistles and her playful pastorals (both of which have recently received critical attention), she produced a substantial amount of religious poetry, and in particular, of versifications of scripture. Though almost all eighteenth-century labouring-class poets wrote religious poetry, such work has yet to receive the attention it deserves. Ever ambitious in her topics, Leapor is unafraid to take on some of the more dramatic stories of the Hebrew Bible, as in her 'The Death of Abel' and 'Job's Curse, and his Appeal'. In addition, the volume allows readers to appreciate some of Leapor's more impressive verse tales, whose length makes them resistant to the limited number of pages allocated to minor poets in modern anthologies. Thus, narrative poems such as 'The Rival Brothers' and 'Mopsus; or, the Castle Builder' can be read alongside some of Leapor's more familiar pieces. Taken together, these poems offer complementary perspectives, in particular on Leapor's subtle views of gender relations.

The project to produce the current edition was initiated by Ann Messenger, and she collaborated on it with Richard Greene until her death in 1996. The edition will stand as an important testament to Messenger's scholarly legacy, and a strong complement to her posthumously published monograph, *Pastoral Tradition and the Female Talent: Studies in Augustan Poetry* (AMS Press, 2001). As the author of the important critical biography *Mary Leapor* (1993), Greene is the best-qualified scholar to have completed a modern edition of Leapor's work. Those interested in labouring-class poets of the Romantic Age, such as Burns, Bloomfield, Yearsley and Clare, will do well to immerse themselves in the poetry of their most talented and lively of precursors. But anyone interested in the literature and culture of the long eighteenth century will enjoy and profit from a deeper encounter with Leapor's

writing. Messenger, Greene, and Oxford University Press are to be commended for making this remarkable poet available to a wider reading audience.

Bridget Keegan  
Creighton University

J. Walter McGinty, *Robert Burns and Religion*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003. Pp. 288. £45. ISBN 074563504X.

Ashgate's eighteenth-century and early romanticism lists have been quietly expanding of late, and some valuable criticism is appearing under its imprint. It is a while since an English publisher gambled on a scholarly monograph on Burns, in whom interest has slowly waned (a trend coincidental with, and perhaps caused by, the rise of John Clare as the preferred 'marginal' author in narratives of literary romanticism). While the impressively detailed account of Burns's theological reading and thinking in *Robert Burns and Religion* will prove a useful reference resort for a dwindling band of Burns specialists, it's difficult to see quite where it fits into Ashgate's current list, which is characterised by studies rather more eager to announce their theoretical and contextualising credentials.

More than any other author in British literary history, Burns is endlessly re-imagined to serve many competing interests, and McGinty takes his place in the long line of critics who have fashioned a Burns in accordance with their own tastes. In the process, *Robert Burns and Religion* does not so much disavow as entirely overlook literary theory since the 1960s. The book does convincingly make the case for a Burns who advanced beyond the 'idiot piety' of his youth, but to take at face value his claim that he is an 'honest candid inquirer in all things, including religion' leads to a significant failure to recognise Burns's many inconsistencies, on matters of religion and much else besides. McGinty's Burns (who is, states the final page, 'ever loveable') has beliefs which are always 'deeply felt' and 'constant': writing and talking about God and religion permit a 'therapeutic release of his inmost feelings'. McGinty

seems unconcerned that those feelings are, as ever with Burns, conveniently if unconsciously shaped to match the expectations of the particular audience being addressed; his is a faithful quest for Burns's 'inner thoughts' ('in vino veritas' if necessary, as on page 23). For example, 'The Fornicator', a poem 'explicit in its description of an appearance in church on the charge of fornication' with Elizabeth Paton, is simply taken for autobiography: 'he would surely not have written a fictitious account in which he named Betsey', McGinty concludes; similarly, of a letter to the dying Robert Muir, he assumes that 'Burns seems to be striving to be honest in this letter', a claim for which the internal evidence offered does not convince, to say nothing of the debates of the last four decades concerning intentionality and the Author-function which the book casually neglects.

McGinty's book is immune not only to these modern notions but the principal positions taken by other Burns scholars. In one letter, in which Burns constructs an elaborate theatrical conceit for religion, God is represented as the 'The Great Manager of the Drama of Man', and here McGinty might have drawn on Carol McGuirk's styling of Burns as a consummate performer of multiple identities and roles to investigate the metaphor. There are more telling omissions: the book, its back cover blurb claims, offers 'the first extensive treatment of religion in the life of Robert Burns since Jamieson's study, *Burns and Religion* (1931).' Yet, as the index reveals, Jamieson is not mentioned at all in the book, and this absence contributes to the argument's uneven structure. At its strongest, when detailing Burns's surprisingly extensive theological reading and its influence on the poems and letters, or revealing the theological and political persuasions of the ministerial cast in the satirical poem 'The Kirk of Scotland's Garland', this is clearly the work of an expert in the field. But there is nothing, for example, on the much-debated possibility of Burns's flirtation with Unitarianism; little on his rejection of Spinoza's supposed atheism at a key stage in his intellectual development; and key terms like 'common sense' and 'enthusiasm' sometimes wanted further interrogation. Most disappointing of all are the chapters devoted to the theologies of William Cowper and Christopher Smart, included with a view to shedding light on Burns's comparatively optimistic and providential version of

God, though neither is so near a contemporary as Blake, who might have made a more compelling comparison. The Cowper discussion is mostly tendentious biography, apparently drawn from a single source, David Cecil's much-contested *The Stricken Deer* of 1928, and in addition to its over-emphasis on the sadness of Cowper's life (a description repeated five times in just a few pages), there are a number of unqualified claims, such as for Cowper's unequivocal support of the French Revolution, and vague conclusions ('although raised up in a materially poorer home than that of Cowper, Burns probably had the more enriching experience, and in all likelihood emerged from it better equipped to face the world').

This is a resolutely old-fashioned sort of book: the gap of seven decades between the book-length studies of Burns's religion by Jamieson and McGinty feels much shortened by the latter's familiar and companionable prose style, and this is not, of course, necessarily a failing. But for all its genial ease and its encyclopaedic knowledge of mid-eighteenth-century theology, the book's reluctance to situate its argument in the context of modern scholarship proved insurmountably frustrating, and is likely to limit its interest to readers who share its narrow specialism.

Tim Burke

St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill

Peter Garside, ed., James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001. Pp. 366. £35. ISBN 0748614141.

Adrian Hunter, ed., James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001. Pb. Pp. 316. £5.99. ISBN 1551112264.

Splendidly entertaining as well as moving and disturbing, Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is always a pleasure to read. Since its anonymous publication in June 1824, the *Confessions* has moved from being a novel

which, despite its fair share of attention in early reviews, only one reader appears to have praised openly in the author's lifetime (Mrs. Hughes, the wife of a canon of St. Paul's in London), to an acknowledged masterpiece of Romantic literature. Since André Gide initiated critical discovery of the *Confessions* in the twentieth century with his enthusiastically admiring introduction to the Cresset Press edition of 1947, John Carey's edition of 1969 (Oxford World's Classics) has been most influential in cultivating the informed interest of new generations of readers and scholars. These two new editions, by Peter Garside (for Edinburgh University Press) and Adrian Hunter (for Broadview Press), will now continue to enhance appreciation for Hogg's extraordinary novel.

The texts of both new editions are based on the 1824 first edition, in which Garside persuasively detects the printer's fidelity to Hogg's original writing – a rare conjunction in the production of Hogg's other works. Garside's authoritative scholarship and generous annotations to the text are particularly impressive and illuminating. To be fair, however, each of the editors provides an informative introduction and notes, and a different selection of supporting materials, which make both of the books highly commendable either for teaching purposes or general enjoyment.

Hunter's introduction focuses particularly on the religious contexts of the novel, unpacking complex ideological conflicts and controversies with clarity, discussing possible antecedents, and relating the *Confessions* to Gothic novels of the period and developments in psychology. In keeping with the Broadview series, the appendices, which include extracts from theological works, contemporary fiction and autobiography, medical reports on mental illness, and, most usefully, the novel's first critical reviews, are especially useful. The accompanying 'brief chronology' of the author's life is also worthwhile, although this reviewer felt that a fuller human interest in Hogg's personality was lacking in the introductory discussion. Readers who are intrigued by the man who wrote such a mysterious and skilfully indeterminate novel are unlikely to glean a sense of Hogg's lively personality or his varied personal and professional experience in Ettrick and Edinburgh, as a shepherd and later a professional writer. Nevertheless, Hunter presents the

*Confessions* with accuracy and care, placing welcome emphasis on the deliberately perplexing nature of the work and Hogg's desire to unsettle and challenge us as readers. Given the damaging (if fashionable) isolation with which the *Confessions* has too long been regarded, the drawing of some parallels between Hogg's novel and other works of fiction is encouraging.

Garside's edition is the ninth volume of the ongoing Stirling / South Carolina Research Edition of *The Collected Works of James Hogg* (Edinburgh University Press, from 1995) under General Editors Douglas S. Mack and Gillian Hughes. The project, which is now expected to comprise thirty-four volumes when complete, gives the corpus of Hogg's writings unprecedented availability in the form of scholarly texts, covering his poetry, prose, fiction, and plays. As part of this endeavour, Garside explicitly seeks to redress the popular misapprehension that the *Confessions* is 'an unexplained "one-off" masterpiece' (xii) by situating it among Hogg's other fictions, as well as works by other writers. His extensive introduction of nearly a hundred pages is not only a tour de force of scholarly research, but also brings a wealth of illuminating contexts to the novel in an engaging style. Hogg's familiarity with Borders folklore and oral culture and his awareness of religious debates, Edinburgh criminals, and phrenological findings all receive attention, together with his involvement with *Blackwood's*. One of the most valuable sections of the book for any reader is the extremely useful and interesting 'Historical and Geographical Note'. Ian Campbell's afterword, placing the novel in relation to past and present critical trends, and the inclusion of several maps of the Ettrick and Edinburgh locations in the novel, further enhance the volume. Edinburgh University Press has since matched the elegance and quality of the hardback with an equally attractive but more affordable paperback of this edition.

It is heartily hoped that these two editions of the *Confessions* will not only help to bring this strange and fascinating novel to a new readership, but will also encourage the recognition and further study of its fruitful engagement with other writings of the period, and the appreciation of Hogg's importance as a major Romantic writer.

Meiko O'Halloran  
Linacre College, Oxford

Andrew Monnickendam, ed., Christian Isobel Johnstone, *Clan-Albin: A National Tale*, Association for Scottish Literary Studies, Vol. 32. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2003. Pp. 598. Hb.: £25. ISBN 0948877529. Pb.: £8.95. ISBN 0948877537.

Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781-1857) is a particularly intriguing female author of the Romantic period. Socially disadvantaged as a divorced and remarried (but significantly childless) woman, she was nevertheless a literary pioneer, perhaps the only woman to edit an important periodical before the 1860s. Best-known (and probably best-paid) for Meg Dods' cookery book (playfully published under the pseudonym of the innkeeper of Scott's *St Ronan's Well*) she was a serious and respected journalist for, successively, the *Inverness Courier*, the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, *Johnstone's Edinburgh Magazine*, and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*. Yet little is known of her life, not much of her correspondence appears to have survived, and her works are not readily obtainable. Her rising importance in Scottish and Romantic literature over the past twenty years has only increased this sense of frustration. An edition of *Clan-Albin* (1815) is therefore both timely and welcome.

The subtitle of *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* indicates that Johnstone's concerns are partly ethnographic, describing a valued way of life in the Scottish Highlands that is in the process of disintegration under the pressures of industrialisation, of capitalism, and of Europeanisation if not yet of globalisation. As Andrew Monnickendam remarks in his helpful introduction, events are initially described 'in such a way that the reader is continually informed of the Highland way of life, customs and beliefs' (vii). The particularities of traditional life in the Scottish Highlands, however, are partly dissolved subsequently by the comparisons Johnstone makes to other pre-industrial societies encountered by the hero, Norman. Ireland is one 'kindred

land', where he finds 'the same language, the same manners, the same graceful frankness, and open-hearted hospitality' (239, 240), and in the Spanish peninsula he notes 'traits of resemblance between the Scots and the Spaniards' (450). At times it is tempting to conclude that Johnstone's object of regret is not so much the loss of a distinct nationality as of a European pre-industrial past, even at times the loss of childhood's rootedness in one locality. This Paradise Lost can never consciously be recreated, as the Lady Augusta (rightly described by Monnickendam as Johnstone's *alter ego*) is aware when she reflects that the fostering care of her grandson for his clan at the novel's conclusion has nevertheless 'something wanting' in its replacement of the 'rough feudal magnificence' of her youth by the 'comfort and elegance' of her old age (555).

Johnstone's is a radical conservatism, however, existing alongside passionately-held views on the need for religious toleration, multiple exposure of abuses of power, and substantial anti-militarism. The graphic description of the military flogging of Phelim O'Bourke is comparable to the resolute facing of post-Culloden atrocities in James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Woman*, both read in the context of Scott's avoidance of plain brutalities in that archetypal national tale *Waverley*. (A connection pinpointed in the choice of Allan Ramsay's portrait of Flora MacDonald for the cover of this edition.) The systematic destruction of Highland culture after the Jacobite Rising is linked thematically in this as in other key Scottish fictions to Scottish military prowess during the Napoleonic Wars.

*Clan-Albin* is a novel of strong female characters, from the matriarch Lady Augusta to the resolute young widow Monimia. Even Flora, the most conventional-seeming innocent blossom, willingly endures the rigours of a Peninsular campaign to accompany her husband, and though she loves her bigoted Presbyterian father dearly chooses her religion for herself. Such women are, as Monnickendam says of the novel itself, 'willing to engage with controversy at any moment, but at the same time, humane and even-handed' (vi).

'A Note on the Text' briefly summarises the relationship between the early editions of the work, but gives little idea of the editor's own procedures.

Monnickendam simply states that his edition 'is based on the first printing' (with lists of *errata* incorporated in the text), and adds that 'obvious errors have also been corrected' (xvi). A full textual apparatus and list of emendations may not have been possible within the constraints of an ASLS annual volume, but a brief account of errors in the copy-text with a few examples of editorial procedure would have been helpful. The explanatory notes, grouped by chapter, provide much useful information in a small space, particularly in identifying literary quotations and allusions and in glossing unfamiliar words in several languages. Most if not all of the reader's questions are sufficiently answered (though I should like to know, for instance, whose inspiring exploits Norman reads in Chapter XV, 'that narrative in which the most amiable of fathers records the exploits of the most gallant of sons').

Enough of such quibbles! Monnickendam's finely-contextualising and well-written Introduction is supported by a useful list of Johnstone's other works and suggestions for further reading. *Clan-Albin* has been made both accessible and attractive to teachers and students of Romanticism, and we owe Andrew Monnickendam our thanks.

Gillian Hughes  
University of Stirling

William A. Ulmer, *The Christian Wordsworth 1798-1805*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. Pb.: Pp. 228. £15. ISBN 0791451542.

*The Christian Wordsworth* 'undertakes two closely related projects'. Firstly, 'it reconstructs the evolution of William Wordsworth's religious attitudes' from 1798-1805, and secondly it 'presents detailed readings of the Immortality Ode and Thirteen-Book *Prelude* as religious poems' (i). Ulmer views these as distinct projects, but the viability of the latter is determined by the conceptual strategies that he uses to formulate the former, and it is those strategies that I will discuss here.

Ulmer joins the enduring debate over Wordsworth's religion in order to challenge 'the common contemporary opinion that Wordsworth's most compelling work is radically humanistic, radically secular' (ix). One way in which he makes this challenge is through careful contextualization of contemporary statements about Wordsworth's religious beliefs. So, for example, Ulmer relocates Coleridge's comment on Wordsworth's 'semi-atheism' in a rhetorical analysis of the letter to Thelwall in which it originated. In this way he helpfully questions the casual use of such sources in the reconstruction of Wordsworth as a secular humanist.

Ulmer goes far beyond this however, and develops this defence against a secularized Wordsworth into a full-blown thesis that claims to demonstrate the existence and palpability of Wordsworth's 'Christianity' from 1798-1805. The hermeneutical rationale here is that 'Wordsworth's poetry can be read as an expression of Wordsworth's ideas' (189). Ulmer has this both ways however, as the poetry is an expression of the poet's beliefs, but a knowledge of the beliefs also helps us to interpret the poetry. To this end, Ulmer identifies Wordsworth as having a continuous (if not consistent) Christian faith during the period 1798 to 1805, thereby providing the basis for the later readings that he makes of the 'Immortality Ode' and *The Prelude*. The benefit of this, Ulmer argues, is that we can 'integrate the man [Wordsworth] with a body of work which affirms key religious ideas' by 'reading the poetry as a displaced expression of the man's private allegiances to Christianity' (189). The existence of these 'private allegiances' – Wordsworth's religious faith – seem to be both the premise and conclusion of Ulmer's work.

Ulmer's project is inspired in part by the David Bromwich line that language, literary history, and property didn't write Wordsworth's poems, but that 'a man wrote them' (188). Ulmer's variation on the Bromwich theme occasionally approximates to 'a man didn't write the poems, beliefs did.' Such beliefs however are difficult to specify or to establish, and this is apparent from Ulmer's varied descriptions of, for example, Wordsworth's 'residual Christianity' (36), his 'instinctive allegiances to Christianity' (67), and his 'reassertions of central Christian *truths*: the existence of God, the reality of the

Fall, the possibility of spiritual redemption through love, and the fact of a spiritual afterlife' (32). These phrases (particularly the first two) are fairly vague, and in the case of the third, I imagine few readers would recognize these 'truths' as characteristic Wordsworthian themes. Moreover, there are methodological difficulties in establishing how such an elusive faith might be located as a place from which the religious ambiguity of the poetry might be clarified. Ulmer produces evidence that is often of interest in this discussion, but that can be less substantial than the poetry itself, for example: 'The closings of his letters to friends sometimes included a form of "God bless you" from 1798 on' (91).

Ulmer's argument is chronologically organized, moving from Wordsworth's early quasi-pantheism to the point at which "By 1805-6 Wordsworth was clearly a Christian' (27). Ulmer thinks Wordsworth's Christianity is deeply conservative, and in this, his work has something in common with other critical work on the poet that has sought to expose the conservatism of the supposedly radical early years. He writes, for example, 'the Anglican Wordsworth of 1804 held a faith he had come increasingly to value as a familial and national heritage. For Wordsworth, in short, the way of the soul was a conservative way' (xi). However, the similarities between Ulmer's, and, for example, the new historicist revisions of Wordsworth are superficial. While the latter has often been severely critical of the poet's conservatism, Ulmer seems to embrace it. He approvingly unfolds the picture of a Burkean Wordsworth who equates 'stable' family life with the Anglican church and patriotism.

The issue of conservatism here is important, because it indicates the inflection of the term 'Christian' for Ulmer. He avoids specifying the meaning of the word, yet appears repeatedly to use 'Anglican' as its synonym. These recurrent terms, like a number of others in the book (such as 'tradition', 'orthodoxy', and 'conservative') lack a sense of historical specificity. For these reasons, readers who are engaged with the problematizing procedures of critical theory are likely to be troubled by both ideological and methodological aspects of Ulmer's book. However, for readers comfortable with his basic

premises here, *The Christian Wordsworth* may well be a helpful monograph that casts a steady hermeneutical light on the pages of Wordsworth's poetry.

Jonathan Roberts  
Oxford Brookes University

Colin Winborn, *The Literary Economy of Jane Austen and George Crabbe*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 201. £40.00. ISBN 0754638251.

Comparisons between George Crabbe and Jane Austen are hardly new. The anecdotally-minded have always savoured Jane Austen's mordant comment to Cassandra on the death of Sarah Crabbe in 1813: 'Poor woman! I will comfort *him* as well as I can, but I do not undertake to be good to her children. She had better not leave any'. Equally, the older literary histories would note the writers' shared adherence to classicizing values of form into the Regency period. More recently, Austen scholars have retraced various links back from her work to a heterogeneous trio who can be significantly linked as late Augustan Anglicans – Johnson, Cowper and, of course, Crabbe.

However, Colin Winborn's is the first book to give Crabbe significant billing in a joint study. This relative equalization is in turn motivated by the book's key presupposition: that both authors need to be read in the context of both the Napoleonic Wars and that national consciousness of danger, insularity and self-sufficiency constructed by the writings of William Cobbett and William Spence. Themes of individual responsibility and psychological balance, in both poet and novelist, are seen as intimately related to conditions of economic blockade and financial stringency. One bonus of this approach is that Crabbe is released from the literary-historical box marked 'belated' which has at times led to a patronizing attitude to his achievement.

Indeed, the approach questions taken-for-granted assumptions about both authors. They emerge for example as simultaneously concerned with enterprise and control rather than, as is sometimes assumed, with the latter at

the expense of the former. It is true that there is a felt need to harbour resources - economic, cultural, social and personal - in a time of scarcity but also a need for disciplined advancement and change. We are led to see a significant link with the Enlightenment debate on the merits of luxury and wealth but are also brought into a sharpened relationship with the speeded-up historical context of war.

The rhetorical and narrative strategies of the two writers are seen as enforcing a concern with useful order: 'In her neat description of Uppercross parsonage, Austen evokes a model of disciplined literary space. The couplet in its turn makes for a tighter relationship between sound and sense, and a greater compaction of meaning, than other poetic forms'. But there is a need also to think forward in a way that is creative as well as disciplined: 'Crabbe's poetry hints at an ideal situation somewhere between...false extremes, of hoarding up and flowing over: its alternate iambic pulse self-consciously conjures the ebb and flow of the tide, and suggests to the ear a balanced and careful reciprocation'.

The themes of independence and confinement (the first exacerbated by the second) in wartime Britain are seen microcosmically in the Highbury of *Emma*. This village has its positive values of autonomy but feels constricted within itself and threatened from without: 'The village however...is a highly confined space in which it is often felt that there is no room to turn, or turn away...Highbury is also a space under constant pressure from an outside world that threatens on occasion to break in.' But community in Jane Austen is seen to be more than geographical and its historical dimension is positively Burkean in *Mansfield Park*. Neither Mr Rushton's drastic 'improvements' nor Tom Bertram's wasteful consumption will answer. Fanny Price with her respect for the past is the one person who can be entrusted with the moral direction of Mansfield.

As always, one could carp a little. Although it avoids one New Historicist hazard (of trying its authors by hindsight) it does not entirely escape a second (that of recycling elements of an older historicism). So we hear nothing of the robust alternative discourses on the Napoleonic Wars, represented in literary terms by the Dissenting discourse of Barbauld's

recently-resurrected *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* and in polemical ones by northern manufacturers, to whom a negotiated peace and the resumption of trade were much the preferred options.

But Winborn's study succeeds excellently in what it attempts – to show that there are shared dominant themes within Crabbe and Austen which can best be understood in relation to a country at war for over twenty years. More, it shows that the authors' social visions do not derive simply from abstract paradigms of thought but from complex and pro-active accommodations with the changing and difficult world around them. Above all, the book passes a key test – that one can enjoyably return from it to, say, the *Tales* of 1812 or to *Mansfield Park* with a sharpened perspective but without losing the context of other interpretations. Winborn's very specific focus does not control but enhances our reading of both authors and our understanding of the links between them.

K. E. Smith  
University of Bradford

Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 262. £45.00. ISBN 0521826993.

Johnston's book adds to debates examining the role of missionaries in imperialism demonstrating that colonial identity was forged as much at the peripheries as within the colonial centre. As her title suggests, however, she highlights the crucial role that the act of writing played in these forgings arguing that the 'missionary at work was characterised by authorship'. Taking the three sites of India, Polynesia and Australia as her case studies Johnston inflects her readings of the figure of the missionary with an understanding of their liminal and 'mutually imbricated' role in the field, arguing that this had inevitable, destabilizing effects on the 'textual self-representation of imperial missionary enterprise in Britain and the colonies'. She introduces her archive of the publications of the London Missionary Society before 1860 as a 'proto-

discourse' that performs renegotiations with the specific categories of gender and class, prior to the onset of high imperialism.

Johnston's decision to place text rather than subject or agency at the heart of her study reflects a reorientation in postcolonialism that eschews an attempt to discover the 'native informant' in the archive, instead reading imperial writing as *constitutive* of practice and not a mere reflection of it. The lengthy introductory chapters which comprehensively survey and synthesise current debates promise that Johnston's readings will reveal 'recurrent tropes of representation' that reflect the construction of identities within heterogeneous, circulating evangelical texts ranging from diaries, reports and letters, to biographies and histories. Thus, in the case of India, Johnston charts the shift in which Indian women in the *zenanas* were initially represented as prisoners in filthy cells requiring the light of Christianity and education to free them, only to become constructed as recalcitrant, resistant subjects who wielded power over their male relatives. Their apparent powerlessness initially granted the wives of missionaries access to their 'enslaved' sisters yet, when women in the *zenanas* proved resistant to conversion, such readings of gender had to be refigured. Such irreconcilable oppositions at the heart of colonial representation, Johnston argues, reflect the destabilization of convenient stereotypes that legitimised practice and show the compromises missionaries were forced into as they faced resistance from unexpected quarters. This shift, then, denoted a radical change in missionaries' categorisations of gender and domesticity that impacted as much on metropolitan versions of femininity as on colonised subjects.

This chapter, 'Missionary writing in India', is the fourth in the monograph and it is here that Johnston most adequately demonstrates her thesis. What is perhaps frustrating is that the reader has to wait for this close textual analysis which is constantly deferred in place of the analysis of wider debates, secondary texts and co-texts. Despite its proclaimed focus on text the book is remarkably slim on the close textual analysis needed to demonstrate the sources and validity of Johnston's conclusions. The real strengths of this book are not foregrounded, to the detriment of its own importance. Throughout, close reading is engaged in only after lengthy

summaries of wider issues and debates and this approach undermines Johnston's important claim that reading tropes and texts, rather than 'signs of indigenous agency', is the proper role of the literary scholar in the field of postcolonial studies.

Given that Johnston highlights the area of gender as a key site in which to trace the renegotiations of missionary representations, it is telling that Johnston herself struggles to engage with the sexual ambivalence and confusion of Western gender categories in her discussion of the Tāitīan *mahu* which she incorrectly understands in terms of 'homosexuality' and transvestitism. This overlay of terms that were to become solidified in the later half of the nineteenth century onto the figure of the *mahu* signals their ongoing challenge, not only to missionary categorisation, but to our present gender 'types'.

Johnston's deferment of her own scholarship perhaps arises from her stated anxiety that she may be read as an 'apologist' for the missionary figure, traditionally the embodiment of the devastating effects of colonial action. Yet this anxiety may arguably be dispensed with as an appreciation of the ambivalence of the colonial figure (initially advanced by Homi Bhabha) allows for re-examinations of the traditional 'heavies' of the imperial project from slave masters to evangelical missionaries. Crucially, Johnston's reading of Lancelot Threlkeld, the author of several works including *Key to the Structure of the Aboriginal Language* (1850) discloses a carefully nuanced approach to the missionary who criticised colonial practices and appreciated Aboriginal culture while wishing to salvage it from 'heathenism'. While at times Johnston may lapse into an anachronistic assessment of Threlkeld's 'conservatism' versus his 'humanitarian concern', in her treatment of him she captures the janus-faced nature of mutually imbricated individuals whose texts are fraught with ambivalences.

Kerry Sinanan  
University of the West of England

Scott Masson, *Romanticism, Hermeneutics and the Crisis of the Human Sciences*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 241. £45. ISBN 0754635031.

In *Romanticism, Hermeneutics and Crisis of the Human Sciences*, Scott Masson derives his theoretical orientation towards important texts by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats from the father of twentieth century philosophical hermeneutics: Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer's *magnum opus* – *Truth and Method* (1960) – argues that German Romanticism's valorisation of the mythic and the non-rational is a reversal of the Enlightenment's purported progression from *mythos* to *logos*, thereby unconsciously perpetuating the Enlightenment project in an inverted form. In a similar way, Masson contends that both the Enlightenment and Romanticism share a desire for self-definition and self-grounding that would exclude any reliance upon myth, tradition and prejudice, and which privileges universal 'truth' over socio-political 'meaning'. This desire for self-legitimation can, argues Masson, be traced back to Cartesian doubt and the subsequent installation of the *cogito* as that which provides a secure ground for thought. But by the mid-to late eighteenth century, this reliance upon the *cogito* became increasingly suspect following the respective critiques offered by Hume and Kant in the mid to late eighteenth century. Consequently, new strategies for self-grounding appear, according to Masson, at precisely this time – that is, at the beginning of the Romantic period. In short, Masson's hypothesis is that 'the Enlightenment's universal perspective, inherent in the terms of the Cartesian subject, has been perpetuated and exacerbated by the shift to organicism in the Romantic period rather than truly resolved by it' (200).

Masson sees Wordsworth as the paradigmatic example of a Romantic author operating within a Neo-Cartesian, Enlightenment framework, and in this connection he cites both the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, and 'Tintern Abbey' as prime examples of Wordsworth's hermeneutics of self-legitimation. Both texts, argues Masson, invoke the poet's ability to intuit an organic, transcendental unity or truth – variously referred to as 'life' or 'nature' – which gives the poet's productions a universal significance and value that

allegedly exceeds traditional argumentative positions associated with the idea of a *sensus communis*. It is, according to Masson, Wordsworth's invocations of this 'theological organicism' (97) that see him repeat what Gadamer diagnosed in *Truth and Method* as the Enlightenment's 'prejudice against prejudice' (108). Significantly, Masson also finds this tendency toward organic universality in Shelley's *Mont Blanc* and (in a more attenuated and self-reflective form) in Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

The exception to this universalising tendency in English Romanticism is, according to Masson, Coleridge. Although Coleridge of course initially collaborated with Wordsworth in formulating the aesthetic program of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Masson argues that by the time of the *Biographia Literaria* (1817), he had begun to formulate an explicitly Christian critique of Wordsworth's universal organicism (88–89). Hence, while Wordsworth always saw language and poetic creativity as being related to a universal conception of nature and thus beyond the prejudices of human argumentation, Coleridge, in his famous definition of the primary imagination as a 'repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM', allegedly offers an openly prejudiced legitimisation strategy for the humanities: life *in imago Dei*, in the image of God the Creator (128).

It is in relation to his reading of Coleridge that Masson's agenda comes clearly into view. Despite the fact that Coleridge's definition of the primary imagination was heavily influenced by the works of Kant and Schelling, Masson interprets this aspect of the *Biographia Literaria* against the grain, by seeing it as a decidedly non-Romantic call for the reinstatement of the Christian faith as the ground and *raison d'être* of the humanities, and even more controversially, as a potential solution to the 'central problem of Kantian philosophy' (134). While interesting and provocative, these rather large claims are not backed up with sufficient textual evidence, and sometimes teeter on the boundary between argument and assertion. Unfortunately, these are not the worst of Masson's excesses. At its conclusion, this book descends into unadulterated Christian propaganda, in which the reader is told that the solution to everything from post-modern relativism to economic rationalism is Christianity. It is, offers Masson, 'the new logic of the Christian faith, the logic

presented by the living God and in the living God, [that] can once again restore the humanities, if people are willing to base their knowledge upon it' (221). This extraordinarily naïve statement is symptomatic of a book in which evidently deeply held personal convictions tend to overshadow scholarly arguments.

This is unfortunate, since parts of *Romanticism, Hermeneutics and the Crisis of the Human Sciences* are interesting and well argued. The central premise of the book – that concerning Romanticism's inheritance and perpetuation of Cartesian subjectivity, along with the latter's valorisation of scientific truth over socially mediated meaning – is plausible and, in places, relatively original. In the first two chapters, the author shows a detailed and nuanced understanding of philosophical hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Gadamer, while also adding to this analysis a critique of the hermeneutic tradition – a critique derived from the work of Hannah Arendt. Masson's readings of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats are sometimes original and persuasive, but also marred in places by his tendency to find Cartesian 'universality' in places where its existence seems questionable. The author also applies Gadamer's discussion of German Romanticism to English texts without taking into account the many differences between the versions of Romanticism that appeared in these two cultures. All of this makes for an interesting, surprising, sometimes challenging and ultimately frustrating reading experience. Alas, this reader was unable to make the requisite leap of faith called for by the author at the book's conclusion.

Angus Nicholls  
University of London

Paul Youngquist, *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Pp. 264. Hb.: \$54.95. ISBN 0816639795. Pb.: \$19.95. ISBN 0816639809.

This captivating material history of the human body arranges the life-stories of deformed, mutilated, extraordinary men and women around a compelling thesis of the 'proper body'. It is an ambitious project, attempting to link body discourse to contemporary political, economical, aesthetic and medical practices. That title word *Monstrosities* hints at the simultaneous fascination and repulsion, curiosity and horror, human deformity provoked in those confronted with it in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and which it indeed often provokes to this day. But Youngquist's responses are emphatic and apt for his intention to understand and contextualise the cultural-corporeal agencies of embodiment proper within the 'history of the culture of normality' (xxix).

Even now the skeletons of the dwarf Caroline Crachami and the giant Charles Byrne, in the Hunterian Museum in London, bear witness to the fastidious efficiency of John Hunter, famous comparative anatomist and a leading candidate for the Gunther von Hagens of his time. While alive, Youngquist's chosen singular bodies defied keen anatomists, curious crowds and exploitative freak-show managers. There were few exceptions. Daniel Lambert – a man neither small nor tall but extremely big – moved to London where he made money from being looked at while doing nothing. Likewise, the armless miniature painter Sarah Biffin bargained both on her talent and her skill to overcome her handicap and enable her to paint, no matter what.

Youngquist has the central characteristics of the proper body emerge in connection with another core corporeal difference: the widespread attitudes to non-European bodies. Through the development of late eighteenth-century raciology and its aesthetic and anatomical materialisation in the work of Petrus Camper and Charles Bell, Youngquist nimbly delineates how European beauty ceased to be merely skin deep, and also came to be embodied in bone. He then analyses William Blake's engravings of African slaves and Olaudah Equiano's slave narrative to explain how the colour white became an essential characteristic of the proper body.

The next stop for Youngquist is Coleridge and De Quincey's opium eating. Touching on pain, relief, excess, therapy, diet and digestion, he proceeds to explain the language of 'Kubla Khan' in terms of disease and

addiction. The positive effect of this drug use is that it releases Coleridge's Dionysian energy, whereas the outcome of Coleridge's voluntary confinement, so argues Youngquist, is the end of poetry and the return to philosophy and religion, and eventually to the community of liberal society. De Quincey was never 'cured' and so remained an outsider. His digestive system is the antithesis of Thomas Beddoes's advice for liberal health and purposeful productivity.

The treatment of the female body in Youngquist's *Monstrosities* abstracts from Martin Van Butchell's pickled wife to Mary Wollstonecraft's death, her mutilated uterus and torn placenta. Youngquist's detailed discussion of obstetric medicine focuses on William Hunter and the propaganda surrounding male-midwife surveillance. Thomas Laqueur's point about the 'invention' of the female sex conveniently supplements the connection between Rousseau's social contract, the sexing of the flesh and liberal definitions of natural imperatives.

For his grande finale, Youngquist gamely recruits Byron, his surgical boots and the botched orthopaedic treatment of an impostor trussmaker. The history of prosthesis becomes particularly vivid when put into the context of the Napoleonic wars. Mobilisation of armies and militia and their training for military campaigns were instrumental in shaping British nationalism and its body proper. More than that, in view of the dire consequences of amputation it becomes clear that a prosthesis can cure, stimulate and, most importantly, complete a body. The juxtaposition of the elegant leg of the First Marquess of Anglesey with the crude wooden peg leg of a common soldier nicely underpins the class agenda of proper liberal embodiment.

*Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism* incorporates some of the key texts and main writers of the period into a more or less coherent narrative about cultural-material embodiment. What Youngquist incontrovertibly establishes is how deformed human bodies are made to function within a liberal society and with regard to its needs and concerns for hygiene and public health: 'Monstrosities confront the proper body with its immanent, progenitive transformation. They are not just a sign of transcendent marvels or a medium for the miracles of medicine. They also materialize

transformative forces, haunting the proper body in the abject shape of change' (9). The lives and deaths of people with deformities can be experienced and appreciated as battlefields of social and political views on which the liberal or normalising discourse gain the upper hand. As expected, this process is at its cruellest when it comes to the treatment of female bodies.

In Youngquist's book monstrosity is on exhibition both as a concept and product in the domain of modern theory and criticism, and it is labelled with the works of Foucault, Judith Butler, Derrida, Kristeva, Kant, Nietzsche, Deleuze – to name a few in no particular order. Youngquist's philosophical digressions are illuminating. But given the richness and intensity of the material his tendency to go out on a theoretical limb can sometimes be a little self-indulgent. The real value of Youngquist's study is that it both crystallises and historicises the broad spectrum of identity and body theory.

Sibylle Erle  
Nottingham Trent University

Neil Vickers, *Coleridge and the Doctors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. 186. £45. ISBN 0199271178.

Martin Wallen, *City of Health, Fields of Disease: Revolutions in the Poetry, Medicine, and Philosophy of Romanticism*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 202. £40. ISBN 0754635422.

The books reviewed here reflect two different approaches to what is, in part, similar material. Neil Vickers' *Coleridge and the Doctors* uses thick description (loosely put) to illuminate the deep significance of medicine and medical philosophy in Coleridge's life and writing between the years 1795 and 1806 (the period of his descent into ill health); Martin Wallen's *City of Health, Fields of Disease* also examines Coleridge in three chapters, but takes an overview of the Romantic period by way of Wordsworth, the radical medic, chemist and writer Thomas Beddoes, and Schelling. Although Wallen's ambition is to be applauded, his work is driven by a pseudo-Foucauldian set of assumptions

which do not ring true with the historical and literary evidence; Vickers' analysis is the more convincing because, although limited in focus, he is more alive to the complexities of Coleridge and his culture – medical and literary.

*Coleridge and the Doctors* argues that Coleridge's involvement with 'philosophical medicine' was not mere dabbling, a bolt-on to his intellectual and literary development, but an essential strand in his thinking and a key part of his later turn to German idealism. At least as interesting is Vickers' concern with Coleridge's rationalisations and self-diagnosis of his own ailments which, famously, were manifold and interrelated. Vickers makes the important point that, according to the lights of his own time, university-educated men expected (and were expected by others) to diagnose their own complaints; Coleridge was intimately concerned in the practice and philosophy of his own illness, a vision which rewrites the impression of the reckless opium-swilling poet-philosopher which has come down to us via the more sensational accounts of his life.

In the first chapter, 'Medicine in the 1790s: A Very Brief Introduction', Vickers – conveniently for the novice and inducted alike – provides a stimulating and accessible overview of the medical world as Coleridge would have understood it in the late eighteenth century. As well as covering the usual bases, Vickers is alive to the political implications of medical theories and to the fluidity of the two ideologies: he rightly observes that there was no particular scientific reason to prevent medical traditionalists from being politically radical or vice-versa. He also disagrees with Alan Richardson about the extent of materialism's influence: Vickers believes that it has been overstated (possibly in much the same way that atheism's force in the period is often exaggerated). This is an argument which will continue, but this chapter will be a useful introduction (as it states) for anyone interested in the medical culture of the period.

The second chapter moves on to Coleridge's relationship with Thomas Beddoes. Thanks to the labours of the late Roy Porter, amongst others, Beddoes is coming to be recognised as a major player in British Romanticism (surely the time is ripe for a conference on Beddoes?). Vickers makes a strong case for the influence of Beddoes's 'medical mentalism' (the 'idea that

physiological events can be traced back to laws exactly coincident with those of the thinking mind') on his friend Coleridge (39). However, lest we fix Beddoes as a 'mentalist' in opposition to the materialism of Erasmus Darwin (another strong inspiration for Coleridge as Vickers shows), Vickers describes Beddoes as a complex and contradictory character who was quite capable of encouraging views to which he himself did not subscribe, or indeed of changing his own mind on a particular subject. This is Vickers' strength: Wallen's interpretation of Beddoes is monologic, whereas Vickers pays close attention to the nuances in both character and philosophy of Beddoes (and indeed Coleridge). Where Vickers' characters are flawed and often illogical human beings, Wallen's are more likely to be caricatures.

The rest of Vickers' book consists of four chapters that deal with Coleridge's use of medical ideas in relation to himself: 'Coleridge's Illnesses', 'Coleridge and Opium', 'Coleridge's "Abtrusive Researches" and the Dejection Crisis', 'Hysteria, Epilepsy, and "The Pains of Sleep"'. Coleridge, Vickers argues, was well informed about his protean diseases like gout and scrofula, and originally took opium as a Brunonian cure for his 'irregular' gout and its attendant stomach problems. Coleridge's understanding of scrofula was partly formed by Beddoes's mentalism: genius and virtue could bring on such diseases – an idea attractive to many literary types at this time. However, Coleridge had his philosophical limits and still resisted an over-precise link between certain mental acts and illness.

Opium, for Coleridge, was not an addictive substance in the way that we would understand it: Vickers points out that there was no generally accepted theory of opium addiction at the time, although there were dangers (habitual drunkenness, because usually the grains of opium would be dissolved in wine or brandy). At first Coleridge thought opium was a stimulant, although he was later forced to view it as a narcotic.

The next, complex, chapter identifies the 'abtruse researches' of 'Dejection: An Ode' as a 'steadily evolving theory of bodily well-being' which arose, not as a result of opium addiction, but due to Coleridge's continuing attention to his primary concern about worsening gout and scrofula and his attempt to console Tom Wedgewood, his patron, who was battling with

suicidal thoughts related to some form of anxiety and depression. Perhaps most interestingly, Vickers claims that, in forming a medico-philosophical opposition between sight and touch, Coleridge paved the way for his ideas on fancy and imagination. Vickers' application of the 'abstruse researches' to the Dejection ode is subtly done and illuminating.

'Hysteria, Epilepsy, and "The Pains of Sleep"' concludes the main part of the book by describing Coleridge's shift in attitude to his illnesses, a change partly prompted by his nightmares. Despite Coleridge's refusal to acknowledge medical sources - this is a big problem for Vickers throughout this book and tends to give it a speculative air at times - Vickers argues that Coleridge, via Darwin and Beddoes in a somewhat paradoxical alliance, believed that he was suffering from epilepsy and hysteria. 'The Pains of Sleep' is analysed, albeit briefly, in the light of Coleridge's meditations on his physical and mental state in this period. The book finishes by making the observation that Coleridge - ever the divided thinker - never finally decided between Beddoesian mentalism and Darwinian materialism.

Martin Wallen's *City of Health, Fields of Disease* takes its title from Socrates' banishment of the mimetic poets to the unhealthy regions beyond the walls of his ideal society in the *Republic*. Socrates, argues Wallen, provided an oppositional 'model of the inner space defined through a defense against the outer' (1). This identity philosophy apparently became popular in the Romantic period because it helped redefine human relationships internally and with Nature, and also because it suited the shift towards a modern medical doctrine. Health, according to Wallen, now becomes an ethical and unified identity, a static integrity defined against disease, which itself becomes any threat to integrity and identity - a danger conceptualised in terms of fluidity. Unfortunately for the thesis of the entire book, and as Wallen observes in his introduction, there was 'no conscious decision on the part of Wordsworth, Coleridge or Beddoes to adopt the Socratic model' and they make no reference to Socrates in this respect (3). Unconvincingly, Wallen states that it was 'natural' for the Romantics to uphold the Socratic distinction between health and disease (2).

In the final chapters Schelling emerges as the hero of the piece, almost: all the other participants in the Romantic project cited by Wallen – Wordsworth, Coleridge, Beddoes – used medical rhetoric to justify a politics of exclusion, of the healthy versus the diseased. Schelling is evidently a postmodernist in the making because he proposes, or moves towards proposing, an alternative view that depends on a politics of inclusion. Inspired by the Brunonian concept of health and disease being along a continuum of life as a forced state, Schelling visualises ‘multiple healths’ rather than the finite and monological Socratic opposition of health and disease. In constructing this opposition between Schelling and the others, Wallen is forced to reduce Wordsworth, Coleridge and Beddoes to authority figures, whose version of Romanticism remains the dominant one with us today: Wordsworth tells us how to write poetry, Coleridge how to criticise it, and Beddoes how to combine moral and physical health. Sadly, Wallen’s basic thesis forces him to caricature such complex people and their works; a look to Neil Vickers’ book is a healthy corrective to this approach.

Clark Lawlor

University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Sue Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Fiction*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 165. ISBN 0754633063.

Recent years have seen a steadily emerging series of books which trace the evolution of a connected set of concerns about property, the law, and Britain’s commercial social order in studies which insistently cross the divide between eighteenth century and Romantic texts. In many of these books, such as April London’s *Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* and Miranda Burgess’ *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830*, this nexus of concerns is shaped by a central focus on the problematic legal and cultural status of women. Far from reinventing the rise

of the novel, these accounts tend to approach novels as discursive laboratories that bear eloquent witness to the resolution (or unravelling) of what J.G.A. Pocock famously described as the Machiavellian moment as Britain adapted itself to its new commercial realities. In these studies, the Romantic period figures – as it does more often than not these days – as an age whose main crises are only intelligible as the outcome of inherited tensions.

Sue Chaplin's *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women's Fiction: Learning to Dread* is the most recent addition to this collection. Its strength lies in Chaplin's ability to weave theoretical insight, historical research, and textual analysis together in a series of tightly argued chapters that turn on a double movement which, she argues, inheres in articulations of the sublime: a recognition of existential collapse that must be contained through a rhetoric of transcendence. Chaplin cites Luce Irigaray's argument – one which constitutes the book's central theoretical debt – about the explicitly gendered nature of this double movement. If, as Irigaray argues, 'Western philosophy is founded upon the symbolic exclusion of the body of the mother,' woman must be 're-presented back into the symbolic order which establishes as its ruling principle a transcendental, immaterial, masculine law of being' in a duly sanitized version of femininity (2). If this sounds smart but a bit 1980s, Chaplin's argument gains its real currency and its ultimate political significance from its success in locating these abstractions in the historically nuanced terms of eighteenth-century women's anomalous legal and cultural status as '*improper* subjects' (31). William Blackstone's *Commentaries* (1753) may have famously consigned married women to a legal non-existence but the age was also marked by a very different dynamic. Three years earlier, the generally reactionary Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, had insisted that 'the rule of the court is that where anything is settled to a wife's separate use, she is considered as a *femme sole*; and may appoint in what manner she pleases' (34). Women's newly recognized status as independent economic agents was not, however, without its complications.

Chaplin uses *Clarissa* as the touchstone against which her study of these complications proceeds. By endowing his heroine with both legal

agency (through her grandfather's bequest) and transcendental moral authority, Richardson produces 'the Clarissa ideal'. If (as G.J. Barker-Benfield put it) God in the eighteenth century becomes more like a woman of feeling than a man of reason (43), *Clarissa* was marked (as Terry Eagleton pointed out) by the paradox that 'Clarrisa's writing is masculine whereas Lovelace's is feminine' (50). But the radical potential of Richardson's 'Clarissa ideal' was disturbed by his inability to jettison a familiar set of anxieties. Clarissa's moral authority is rooted in the discourse of sensibility but the relation of this discourse to the body meant that virtue was never far removed from the possibility of mental and physical breakdown.

If Richardson could not ultimately resolve the tensions which inhered in women's anomalous or improper subjectivity except by killing off his heroine, Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* and Frances Sheridan's *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* enjoy sympathetic readings as informed responses which move beyond Richardson's impasse to interrogate 'the unstable foundation of feminine identity brought into being through various eighteenth-century discourses' (61). Reading the tendency of the *Female Quixote* to undermine its own anti-romance stance against Samuel Johnson's tendency to confuse the very boundary between truth and fiction which he championed in *The Rambler*, Chaplin goes on to demonstrate the ways that Lennox 'uses romance as the basis for a sustained moral critique of aspects of eighteenth-century law' (62). She sets *Miss Sidney Bidulph's* concern with 'the monstrous, potentially murderous mother' (91) against a shrewd analysis of the ways that debates about the operation of sympathy and sensibility manifested themselves a shift in attitudes towards the crime of infanticide, the ultimate crime of the monstrous female.

Chaplin closes with a final pair of chapters that explore the ways that three novels engaged with 'the inevitable impropriety of feminine subjectivity' in the more politicized context of the Revolution debates (107). In doing so, she succeeds in enlivening the well worn subject of Burke's counter-revolutionary writings and Wollstonecraft's response by showing how Eliza Fenwick's novel *Secresy* engages with the impact of these issues on women through a narrative that is implicitly but crucially grounded in Lord Hardwicke's

1753 Marriage Act. In doing so, Chaplin prepares the ground for a final chapter which engages with the equally well established debate about the politics of the gothic novel by contrasting two very different responses to the question: a uniquely feminine experience of the sublime in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*. The result is not only a thoughtful reconsideration of the impact of the Revolution debates on women's struggle for cultural and political self-realization. Chaplin's historical use of Irigaray's theoretical insights goes a long way to demonstrating the power of the eighteenth-century novel as a means of confronting and containing anxieties about improper subjects whose troubled status had as much to do with the law and evolving ideas about property as it did with the discourses of sensibility and the sublime.

Paul Keen  
Carleton University, Ottawa

Bruce Redford, *Designing The Life of Johnson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. 181. £30. ISBN 0198187394.

Philip Smallwood, *Johnson's Critical Presence: Image, History, Judgment*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 172. £42.50. ISBN 0754633578.

Greg Clingham, *Johnson, Writing, and Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 222. £40. ISBN 0521816114.

Nicholas Hudson, *Samuel Johnson and the Making of Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 290. £45. ISBN 0521831253.

The place of Samuel Johnson at the centre of the eighteenth century continues, whether as bugbear in (now rather tired) Romantic readings, with his supposed rationality the crumbling edifice of so-called 'neo-classicism', or as the imaginative fulcrum of the present studies, which all, in their different

ways, present a flexible Johnson who has much to teach those only familiar with the critical caricature.

Such centrality is of course partly due to the immense success of Johnson's biographer, even if Boswell's monumental *Life* did sometimes create a taste by which Johnson's own writings were submerged. Bruce Redford, in his thoroughly enjoyable account of Boswell's enormous task (the 2001-2 Lyell Lectures in Bibliography) refuses for the most part to enter into the debates perpetuated by the late Donald Greene about the nature of Boswell's achievement, preferring to argue implicitly, through detailed study of the process of the *Life*, for its inherent (though hard-won) significance as a defining type of a genre. Boswell's biography of genius required such intense reworking from manuscript (through an endless scheme of additions and interventions) as to make even the most pedantic modern academic seem somewhat fly-by-night; how Boswell managed to charm the long-suffering printers, as he entered with yet another cancel sheet, is a mystery that even Redford's comprehensive detailing of the minute process of revision cannot explain. This process of endless reworking would, as Redford shrewdly points out, have continued for as long as Boswell himself did, making the *Life* an evolving, Shandean text.

Alongside bibliography, there is much fascinating discussion here of Boswell's artistic method, and its revelation through study of manuscript revision: the famous desire for a 'Flemish picture' is related to the technique for telling naturalistic verbal sketches and cameos, carefully tuned by the meticulous yet ever-polishing biographer. An account of the dramatising of significant scenes and dialogues in the *Life* throws up musical analogies, as they resemble intimate duets and more public polyphony. Boswell's instinctive feel for the rhythm and tone of scenes is fixed in his compulsive editing; the meeting with Wilkes takes the form of a play, with Boswell as the playwright who has led his audience into the theatre and then absented himself, to add dramatic immediacy. A lecture on the epistolary units of the *Life* finds careful planning in an area that has seen accusations of padding. Boswell's setting of letters, his structuring of them as units and suites, the prominence given to highpoints such as the riposte to Chesterfield, all show how the tributary parts

of the work form a comprehensive narrative frame, rather than a haphazard jumble of information. In the final lecture, 'Taming Johnson' Redford faces the question of Boswell's disguising of certain facets of his subject and hero. His portrait of Johnson is softened in many respects: savagery, violence, and misanthropy are toned down, or placed into a gentrifying context. Johnson's verbal attacks and strong sexual desires are repressed, reduced, turned to comedy or counter-weighted by Boswell's careful alterations from manuscript to printed text, which qualify and check the more uncontrolled elements of his subject. Redford admits that occasionally this leads us to see the author's carpentry too easily, yet such a method of reducing the potential extremes of Johnson is not seen as a flaw: Johnson's strengths only emerge fully if his weaknesses are controlled by Boswell's careful creation. In a brief discussion of the recent controversies about Johnson's supposed Jacobitism, Redford opines that 'One person's "massaging" and "manipulation" is another's "artistic control"' (142). This is an admirably level-headed way of viewing irrevocable critical arguments, and Redford's book is as stimulating and readable an account of Boswell's artistic control as we could hope to read.

Redford's attention to the details of Boswell's revisions offer a complex and sometimes contradictory Johnson who refuses to slot easily into the dogmatic conservatism (both personal and literary) that has long been the easiest (and most misleading) way of fitting him into literary history. The claim of Philip Smallwood, in *Johnson's Critical Presence*, is that such historians, for all the fashionable appearance of their work, are resolutely (and unconsciously) old-fashioned in their attitude towards Johnson as a literary critic; recent dismissals of Johnson's criticism as reflections of a dead world that cannot communicate with us merely mimic earlier traductions by the likes of Saintsbury, underneath the camouflage. Johnson, for Smallwood, has thus been continually patronised and misunderstood and the heterogeneous character and real value of his criticism turned into a series of erroneous generalisations. The fallacy of the critical present is its failure to understand the past beyond the limits of its own experience; an escape from such enclosed critical systems is offered by Smallwood in readings of specific centres of Johnson's criticism, and of its consequences.

The major strand running through these is that Johnson's criticism is remarkable for its richness and range of tone. The comedy of the early periodical papers (often at the expense of artistic pretensions) exhibits a 'sceptical spirit' (21) that anticipates the mature criticism, and its deeper range of judgment. A particularly inspired reading relates *Rasselas* (composed during Johnson's most intensive period of work on the Shakespeare edition), to *Macbeth*, via Dryden's 'Of the Pythagorean Philosophy', Cowley and Montaigne, through the common creative irony of time and mutability. This rich chain is an example of how to 'dismantle the programmatic image of [Johnson's] criticism in favour of receptivity and flexibility, and modify and complicate the kind of historical story that can be told about criticism' (33). A centrepiece of the story is Shakespeare, and discussions of the idea of 'general nature', the co-mixture of Shakespearean genre, and Johnson's often misunderstood response to the absence of poetic justice in the death of Cordelia bring forth that important facet of Johnson's greatest critical writing – its ability to stand as a work of criticism that is itself of the monumentality of literature. Smallwood defines this effect as offering 'a present aesthetic (a poetic) as well as an historical experience. It both constitutes a feeling and communicates one' (53). A reading of the 'Life of Cowley' is concerned with direct examples of Johnson's adherence to the pleasure of reading and the roots of shared experience as a critical benchmark (not the most familiar idea in these RAE-sodden days), in contrast to ideas of inflexibility so often associated with him. Portrayals of such rigidity are examined in a discussion of caricatures of Johnson by Gillray (including the superb 'Apollo and the Muses Inflicting Penance on Dr Pomposo, Round Parnassus', the satirist's contribution to the storm of criticism over the *Lives of the Poets*). These depictions are counterpointed by Johnson's own neglected sense of the comic in the *Lives*.

Smallwood returns to the debilitating effects of Johnson's afterlife, in a reading of Romantic debts to Johnson by supposedly antithetical figures; as well as Stendhal and Hazlitt, Wordsworth's echoes of Johnson's verbal texture (whilst ostensibly disagreeing with him) suggest how much the two had in common in critical terms (and how rewarding an extensive non-oppositional

reading of Wordsworth and Johnson would be). The faultlines of literary history caused by the posthumous need for the Romantic to overthrow its progenitors is followed, in conclusion, by a discussion of canons. As the Aunt Sally of canon formation, Johnson has often been condemned by staggeringly uninformed criticism. Smallwood takes some of it to task, asking sensible questions: if Johnson's 'conservative' canon formation in the *Lives* was so successful, why did so many people disagree with him so violently about its contents? Even if canon-formation was his aim, he has hardly enshrined Cowley in the syllabus, let alone Hammond or Blackmore. A brief suggestion on the dialectical necessity of fixed canons for generations of 'progressive' critics to challenge goes some way to explaining this continual misreading of Johnson's intentions.

A minor quibble with this meticulous book is its tendency to praise the brilliance of Johnson's comic tone at the expense of all others. We are told that his comic mastery eclipses the campus novels of Lodge, the parodies of Frederick Crews, or the puns of Post-Structuralists. It does not seem to me that such heterogeneous elements are easily yoked together to any real enhancement of Johnson's achievement. Similarly, Johnson's 'comic vision of human experience' (95), places him alongside Dryden and Pope, and at odds with such contemporaries as Beattie, Blair, and Joseph and Thomas Warton. Yet such writers have their comedy too, underneath solemnity and earnestness, nor is it clear how the body of work of Johnson's critical contemporaries can be so easily summarised (an interesting counter-example would be Warburton, who shared his notions of human experience with very few, yet whose work is full of similar ideas of 'comic vision', albeit deployed with a blunderbuss). Such moments, however, come partly from Smallwood's profound veneration for his subject, and indicate an abiding passion that is rare in literary studies today.

Smallwood's solution to misreadings of Johnson is, in part, to attend to his writing properly before considering theory. Greg Clingham, in *Johnson, Writing, and Memory*, considers Johnson's complexity of thought as ripe for a theoretical approach, but draws back from its excesses. His concerns are with the recurrent Johnsonian obsessions of time and change. The result is a

stimulating mixture of direct exegesis and conceptual surveys that is stuffed full of ideas, and does not always lend itself to easy summary. Clingham presents 'a rhetorically sophisticated Johnson who sees textuality as a part of (rather than opposed to) historical truth' (7). The central edifice of the argument concerns memory and time; the relationship of the former with the latter is crucial, in suggesting different perceptions of time – the monumental, or endless and unchanging, and the chronological, the world of mutability and loss. Time and memory conflict; the result is what is lost and what can be realised: 'For Johnson, the mind's relation with the world and the self are inherently discrepant' (16). Governing ideas for Clingham are that the present is never, for Johnson, 'that which the mind fully occupies', as it is 'constantly elided by desire, restlessness, dissatisfaction and imaginativeness' (23). Therefore truth, for Johnson is 'hybrid and historically variable', expressing 'Johnson's understanding of the limits of personal perspective' (24).

Although this sounds in blunt paraphrase like the old wine of the vanity of human wishes in a new bottle, the scheme enables ground to be cleared, resulting in some readings of very considerable insight indeed. The suggestive difference between the endless monuments of memory and the ceaseless change of chronology, and the limited perspective that is never fully present, and always elided, explains the paradox of 'general nature', that access to apparently unchanging values which are at the same time changing because of our incomplete perception of them. An excellent reading of Donne explains how his excessive imagination does not, for Johnson, produce that empathetic response of the mind to true wit, and lacks the comprehensiveness of general nature.

The exegesis in the book is a fine support to Clingham's claim that, for Johnson, 'no complex truth can be rendered in any definite or single proposition, and that truth is more likely to be grasped by the creative use and rendition of one's intellectual boundaries and preconceptions' (42–3). Like Smallwood, Clingham is alive to the rhetorical and imaginative power of Johnson's criticism, and its ability to become literature itself by virtue of its own power of performance. Central to Clingham's argument is the *Lives of the Poets*. Supported by discussions of the role of the legal and the place of

narrative in Johnson's thought, are readings of the lives of Milton, Butler, Pope and Dryden. These are seen, in part as significant acts of memory, and memorial, 'bringing together the individual's life and writing within a larger temporal and experiential continuum' (98). The plot of Milton that Johnson thus recovers is sensitively and suggestively drawn, with disagreement with aspects of the life compensated by the way those same energies are transfigured into *Paradise Lost*. The readings of Dryden and Pope extend into a discussion of their related translations of Homer; Dryden, for Johnson is notable for the 'translational quality' of his writings, their sensitivity to 'the many ways in which the past and present are in continual exchange' (125). Clingham sees Johnson's view of Pope's genius (as embodied in the unsurpassed Homer translation) as the closest that the eighteenth century got towards the 'historical distance' of the 'great original'; the value of the *Lives* of Dryden and Pope to posterity, is that 'in their *own* act of translation and memory', they 'fill the temporal and historical aporia' felt towards Homer (153). This trans-generic power of the *Lives* as acts of cultural translation, the relating them back to the powerful acts of translation of their subjects, is a striking way of suggesting the monumental critical achievement of Johnson. Clingham's probing intellectual book represents such monumentality not as stuck in unchanging dogma, but as a necessarily contingent (but also redemptive) response to the losses of time.

In Nicholas Hudson's *Samuel Johnson and the Making of Modern England*, the defences of the ambiguities of Johnson are historical rather than directly literary. Hudson looks at Johnson as both the product of and the influence behind a number of social and political changes in eighteenth-century England. Hudson wishes (where necessary) to complicate simple views of Johnson as either hidebound conservative or (a trend in recent criticism) energetic proto-liberal. The book is beautifully structured and argued, and very clearly written; even undergraduates could follow the accessible line it draws through the difficulties of social definition, party, nationhood and Empire. An opening discussion of shifting social structures rejects the lumpen 'rise of the middle-class', examining Johnson's attitudes towards education (his belief in Classical teaching that would become

fashionable again for 'trade' towards the end of the century and beyond), class (with Johnson distinct from the establishment with which he is often equated, and embodying some developing middle-class values of respectable advance) and the social order: subordination, even (and in many ways because) it is arbitrary, is for Johnson the glue that binds society and prevents chaos. In a section on the value of the *Dictionary* as a liberalising intellectual tool, Hudson demolishes some of the very superficial (but widely held) arguments for its elitism. A chapter on the middle-class woman rebuts ideas that such female roles were purely domestic, as well as reiterating Johnson's strongly held belief in the principle of female education as a necessary part of the dignity of existence (and a way of forestalling its inevitable sufferings), a view that was to win him the respect of the most disparate female thinkers in the future. On the other hand, Hudson refuses to draw the easy 'Johnson as feminist' conclusion from this: as with subordination, 'custom' was a pragmatic consideration that Johnson always upheld, hence the odd mix of radical and traditional thinking about women that emerges (and the discrepancy between his practice and his remarks to Boswell).

In political terms, Hudson's nuanced reading will fail to please everybody (something of an inevitability, given recent debates in this area). His Johnson is not a Jacobite, for very good reasons that he explains at length, and his way through the morass of political allegiance is to place Johnson as part of a transforming attitude towards party. Partial support for the consensus of the cross-party 'broad bottom' ideals of Lyttelton, Chesterfield and others, was somewhat obviated by their abstract notions of the grubbiness of public life; in a neat and innovative coupling, the 'Life of Savage' is used as a negative example of the supposedly inherent values of virtue and merit. For Hudson, such scepticism becomes more pronounced in Johnson's later different (and ambivalent) Toryism, with its need to balance 'the social-economic *transformation* that had gripped his society with the conviction that the emergent order provided nothing to fill the vacuum of tradition' (107).

Such necessary complications are also found in Johnson's idea of public spirit and national community, with the benefits of self-interest being

compromised by the concomitant threats to social unity of its extremes. Hence Johnson's returning to the principles of law and justice, even when it meant taking an unpopular view (as in his defence of the hounded Admiral Byng). The wider problems of nationhood form long discussions of Scotland and Empire: Hudson places Johnson's Scottish skirmishes within the sense of an England progressing from the chaos of a barbaric past, and sees a parallel course in Scotland, encouraged by such thinkers as Robertson and Hume (who are enlisted as witnesses for the defence in their shared views with Johnson of the 'Ossian' controversy). Johnson's attraction towards the chivalric aspects of the Scottish past (and its basis in loyalty, rather than mammon) also emerges in his sometimes contradictory actions over Empire. It is, Hudson says, anachronistic to recruit Johnson as an anti-Imperialist, given the embryonic state of the concept, and his evolving views. Thus, his dislike of the avarice of Imperialism mingled with a qualified approval of its civilising principles. His friendship with the vilified Warren Hastings, and his defence of an inevitable level of colonial corruption are prime examples of this mixture of pragmatism and the allure of imperial grandeur (related by Hudson to the orientalism of *Rasselas* and *Irene*). As Johnson's contradictions point to wider contemporary confusions about these issues, it is to Hudson's credit that he refuses to resolve them smoothly. Here and throughout, there are positions and decisions taken in the book that are unlikely to win universal approval, but given that it will be read by both literary critics and historians, this is hardly surprising. In his conclusion, Hudson describes how Johnson 'had the talent for making specific cultural reactions and crises seem like the eternal verities of human life' (223). A fitting tribute to his genius, it also suggests why he has so often been grossly simplified, though on the evidence here, the sophistication of Johnson criticism continues to outmatch the detractors rather easily.

Adam Rounce  
Keele University