

William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 765. £90. ISBN 052181006X.

William St Clair's monumental new book is the most important contribution yet of the expanding field of book history to the study of Romantic literature. Commenting on the paucity of follow-up work to Richard Altick's seminal *The English Common Reader*, St Clair claims that the 'history of reading is at the stage of astronomy before telescopes, economics before statistics, heavily reliant on a few commonly repeated traditional narratives and favourite anecdotes, but weak on the spade-work of basic empirical research, quantification, consolidation, and scrutiny of primary information, upon which narrative history and theory ought to rest' (9-10). With the unfolding of his own exhaustive research in printers', publishers' and booksellers' archives, summarised and presented in over 250 pages of appendices which themselves provide the seeds of a hundred doctoral theses, this picture of scholarly stagnation has been rendered obsolete and the night sky of Romantic-period readers and reading has come into view with unprecedented clarity. What St Clair has done, through his comprehensive survey of the legal, economic, and technological contexts of book history, and his rigorous quantitative analysis of such factors as book production, prices, edition sizes, sales, and circulation, is to reconstruct historical patterns of reading and to clear a path to understanding the reading experiences themselves of the men and women who constituted the reading public in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rejecting forms of literary history that emphasise 'producer interest', as well as theoretical models, including reader-response approaches, that isolate texts from the actual circumstances of their production and consumption, he works instead from the bottom up, relating the 'governing structures of the print era' to 'readerly horizons, choice of reading, reception, and consequent mentalities' (438). As St Clair suggests, the Romantic period, which witnessed the beginnings of the modernisation of publishing, a rapid growth of reading, and rising concern over the social consequences of increased circulation of print, offers particularly fertile ground for such an investigation.

At each stage of the enquiry, there are fresh insights, new evidence for old arguments, and challenges to worn-out truisms. Tracing the relationship between the book industry and the state, St Clair shows how textual controls were reinforced in the Romantic period after a century of slow liberalisation, taxes taking the place of the licensing regime abandoned in 1695. His masterly analysis of competing and unstable intellectual property regimes reasserts the momentous nature of the abolition of perpetual copyright in 1774, one consequence being a flood of anthologies, abridgements, and adaptations that the London book industry had made impossible during the ‘high monopoly period’. He also throws valuable light on the role of the book industries in Ireland, Scotland, Paris, and North America in challenging the might of the London cartels and cheapening access to literature old and new. The tight interlinkage of price, access, and historic patterns of reading is repeatedly and compellingly demonstrated. From a situation in which restrictive monopolies and high prices succeeded in ‘dividing the reading nation in two, cutting off the majority from participation in modern culture’ (77), after 1774 the ‘minimum price of access’ (116) fell to a quarter of previous levels, enabling what St Clair estimates as a fiftyfold increase in acts of reading. Nevertheless, with the statutory copyright period extended progressively in acts of 1808, 1814, and 1842 from a fairly minimal fourteen years to forty-two years (or the author’s lifetime plus seven years, whichever was the longer), there was only a brief ‘copyright window’ of approximately twenty-five years through which texts of relatively recent provenance, along with those of greater antiquity, passed through to reach a larger readership. This so-constituted ‘old canon’ included poets like Thomson, Young, and Cowper but excluded most of the best-known works of Romantic literature, and St Clair graphically juxtaposes the price of a basket of ‘old canon’ poets, nine shillings, with that of a basket of new copyrighted authors, 95.5 shillings – the equivalent of a week’s income for those on his threshold of ‘respectability’.

There is only space in a brief review to highlight a few principal themes from such a rich and rewarding book. The state-supported corporate theft whereby, between around 1600 and 1774, ‘the London book industry took into its private ownership much of the traditional common culture of England, and then charged a rent for using

it' (50), is certainly one of these. For the Romantic period itself, the 'layering of readership' that meant readers in different socioeconomic groups 'read different texts at intervals of different lengths from the time they were first written, edited or compiled' (40), stands out among the findings. Underpinned by an armoury of facts and figures, and illustrated with a wealth of fascinating case studies, St Clair's thesis demands to be swallowed whole, and this includes his complex picture of multiple and overlapping reading constituencies; nevertheless, it is hard to ignore the broad division of the reading nation into a tiny elite that had access to the most recent literature, including those writers most critically esteemed today, and lower-income groups restricted to a diet of 'old canon' texts that was all, broadly speaking, conduct literature, promoting patriotism, natural religion, and family values. While some will think that St Clair generalises too much about the 'mind of a nation' formed by the reading experiences he reconstructs, he has provided a firmer empirical foundation for speculation about the mentalities of Romantic readers than anything available before, and the implications of his stunningly original research will be pondered for years to come.

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Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel. From Richardson to George Eliot*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pb. ed., 2003. Pp. 224. £17.95. ISBN 0521539390.

Leah Price's vigorous and ramificatory book – now out in a paperback version with glowing endorsements on the back from Claudia Johnson and Mary Poovey and others – is about the way the novel both resists and yet succumbs to what the author calls 'a culture of the excerpt'. That culture appears in these pages as a principal characteristic of the modern literary scene, one which finds its most obvious manifestation in the anthology; but other activities are also brought in as instances of the same temper, such as making abridged versions of long books or quoting in reviews and articles and exam papers.

Samuel Richardson, at once author and book-maker, provides a foundational case. His novels were often abridged in his own lifetime, a practice which, it is nice to learn, involved recasting them grammatically, the first person of Richardson's epistolary form rejigged into an historical third person – as though a run of (apparently) personal letters, individually heedless of their place in some overarching design, was bound to redundancy and verbosity when compared to the work of an omniscient narrator more squarely in control of proceedings. Richardson himself had offered a useful crib to any would-be abridger by supplying an index to the second edition of *Clarissa* listing the contents of each letter; but at the same time, he was responsible for anthologies of aphorisms and maxims drawn from *Clarissa* and other novels, and that obviously constitutes a very different sort of exercise. While an abridgement cuts away the moral reflections to leave the gripping stuff of plot, an anthology of wise saws boils off the simply narrative business and gives you the distilled moral wisdom of the thing. What lies behind such a compilation, says Price, is the suspicion that reading merely for the story is somehow disreputable; and Richardson certainly implies as much when he expresses his disapproval of readers who, so drawn by the 'engaging incidents', skip all the serious bits – the bits, that is, inculcating the maxims which were (he said) why he wrote the novels in the first place. But no doubt Richardson was of the story-teller's party without knowing it: it is the way the self-expressive, epistolary life of his characters exceeds the repressive insistence of their author's tiresome moralism that makes the novels whatever it is that they are. In different ways, then, both anthology and abridgement pick up on an edginess about who exactly is in control that is already abroad in the works; and Price goes on to find a similar sort of dynamic, between an authorial adoption of a single voice and an editorial entertainment of many, in Scott – whose antiquarianism presides over a proliferation of balladeers and story-tellers within his narratives – and, as though by invisible influence, in Lockhart's *Memoirs* of Scott. Whose book is it? Lockhart's documentary impulse to base the book chiefly on a presentation of Scott's letters tussles with a wish to make something of it, a wish which finally triumphed when Lockhart reduced the multi-volume *Memoirs of the Life* into his own *Narrative*

of the Life – like an abridger of *Clarissa* reducing the epistolary superfluity down to a narrative essence that might decently be mastered.

The encompassing historical thesis here is that such tussles occur within a period peculiarly defined by the irresistible rise of the anthology and the abridgement. Influential anthologies, offered as untendentious expression of common judgment, such as Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts* and Dodd's selection of *Beauties* from Shakespeare, gave you collections of the good bits; while the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* and others recast the plays as third-person stories, giving you the gist of what mattered: both sorts of exercise, says Price, 'locate moral value in the parts rather than the whole'. It is as much a chapter in the history of readership as it is a story of editorial habits. Price sees such productions working to divide and rule: anthologies and abridgements might profess openness to all and a friendly consensus, but in practice they worked to separate readers into distinct types, typically associated with gender or age, interested either in story and thrill or in edification and beauty. Radcliffe's novels gather such readerly disjunctions within themselves: purposefully variegated, they juxtapose poetry with prose, the improving with the exciting, incorporating innumerable epigraphs and in-set lyrics and purple patches within the narrative – as though the novel constantly aspired to the condition of anthology. Radcliffe anticipates in her sensational way the more subtly hybrid life of the George Eliot novel, in which 'epigraphs and lapidary generalizations' repeatedly punctuate the story, nuggets that might have been made for quoting and collecting – which of course they duly were, in reverentially edited books of *Sayings* and a *George Eliot Birthday Book*, with which the author went along while disapproving of it. An Eliot novel is, so to speak, an invitation to the anthologist lurking in all of us – an invitation which, if we are the sort of reader of whom Eliot approves, we will almost successfully resist.

Leah Price has found an original historical hook on which to hang an exploration of an abidingly fascinating critical question: how the parts of a novel relate to its whole ('the tension between an organicist theory and a synecdochal practice') and in what ways we should think and talk about that. The point has a

special pertinence for Eliot (as I suppose it does not for Radcliffe) because, a good Wordsworthian in this as in other respects, her moral energies are always exercised peculiarly by the relationship between particular individuals and that wider unity to which they contribute (and by which they are defined). Price's own preferences seem to fall firmly on the side of the whole: she thinks it outrageous that an abridged edition of *Clarissa* should still be used in American classrooms; and I would hardly disagree. But whether quotation *per se* should always summon up the scruples she writes about so well seems to me another question. Talk of 'tension' brings the New Criticism to mind, and Cleanth Brooks's well-known 'heresy of paraphrase' is invoked prominently here as an analogy with the practices of 'plot summary' on the one hand and 'quoting out of context' on the other. But, as Empson responded to Brooks (and later to John Carey) paraphrase is one of few tools a critic has: without it you have little to say, and you need not maintain that what you are saying is somehow equivalent to, or substitutive of, the work you are paraphrasing – any quotation is out of context, for that is what quotation means. (Empson is master of the knowingly reductive paraphrase.) Price herself quotes most beautifully from beginning to end; but her selections, quite properly, do not labour fretfully under some obligation to represent synecdochally the totality from which they are drawn. That burdens every quotation with the mystical duties of the Coleridgean symbol, a part of that the whole of which it represents, and the worldly purposes of illustration and selection seem likely to be more diverse and tendentious than that, even in an anthology that sets out to be somehow 'representative': part of the offer made by any quotation is the invitation to counter-quotation, as this ranging and most impressive book itself handsomely exemplifies. It doesn't advertise itself in quite this way, but, apart from anything else, the book seems to me the most absorbing exploration of organicism and its necessary paradoxes since Murray Krieger's *A Reopening of Closure*: it is striking to see the old theory still provoking such intricacy.

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Charles I. Armstrong, *Romantic Organicism: from Idealist Origins to Ambivalent Afterlife*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. 233. £50. ISBN 1403904758.

This monograph offers a survey of organicist thinking from the German *Frühromantik* of F H Schlegel, through the British Romanticism of Coleridge and Wordsworth and on to twentieth-century literary theory, taking in Richards, Bataille, Gadamer, Blanchot and Derrida. As Armstrong himself points out, his study takes a basically Derridean approach, concentrating on ‘unarticulated tensions and underlying aporias in the various organicisms propounded’ (168), though it is only fair to note that Armstrong's writing style manages to be far more perspicuous than that of most literary critics influenced by deconstruction.

Armstrong traces the problematics of organicism back to the aspiration towards ‘system’ characteristic of German Idealism (15), claiming that Kant's attempts to articulate the relationship between his three critiques manifest a basic tension between the claim that the unity of ‘system’ consists in a ‘hierarchical relation’ to a ‘ruling idea’ (15), and a more decentred conception in which ‘system’ consists of ‘reciprocal interrelationship’ between the parts (17). He argues persuasively that the divergences between post-Kantians such as Schelling and Fichte reflect Kant's foundational incoherence over ‘what kind of systematics’ (20) his philosophy represents, and that this incoherence is responsible for the undecidable relationship between symbol and allegory in Romanticism, on which de Man and so many others have commented.

Armstrong characterizes Schlegel's conception of the fragment as a form of radical organicism in which the appeal to an interrelationship between parts comes to justify interpretative privileging of the individual part, and threatens an ‘uncontrollable proliferation’ of parts (40). Coleridge, on the other hand, is described as concerned to emphasize the hierarchical element of organicism in order to safeguard orthodox Christianity against the monism implicit in German Idealism (64). Armstrong uses this account of the tension between reciprocity and hierarchy in Coleridge's thought to offer an extended reading of the concept of ‘friendship’ in the

conversation poems, noting that the early emphasis on a full mutuality of interests as essential to Pantisocracy, a point which led Coleridge to clash with Southey over the possibility of having servants (p 82), is in conflict with Coleridge's characterization of God as a 'friend' (102), in a relationship where this kind of mutuality is obviously impossible. A similar kind of tension is identified in the architectural tropes of Wordsworth's later poetry: as Armstrong notes, in *The Excursion* the 'simplistic and dogmatic conventionality' (126) of the Pastor's references to Christianity occur at a point when the village church has been left far behind, so that Wordsworth's poetry can be seen as a 'counter-work unfolding on the outside of the gathering of the divine tract' (127).

Armstrong reviews a number of twentieth-century critical positions as responses to organicism, contrasting the recuperative emphasis of Richards' insistence on a 'healthy structure' (134), which in Armstrong's view amounts to a 'neurological version of Judgement Day' (135), with Bataille's determined opposition to utility (141) in which 'the organic principles of interrelationship and hierarchy' (146) are pitted against one another in order to discredit the concept of 'autonomous structure' (146). Armstrong suggests that an inherent organicism underlies Gadamer's concept of the 'hermeneutic circle' (153), and that the transformation of the hermeneutic circle into the 'double bind' which is characteristic of Blanchot and poststructuralism (166) results, in the work of Derrida, in a relationship to organicism which is not the simple opposition characteristic of Roland Barthes and Paul de Man, but one of undecideability in which organicism's totalising tendencies are resisted (170) whilst its potential for destabilising 'metaphysical humanism' (173) is invoked.

As will be apparent from this summary, Armstrong's is a very wide-ranging study which, as a consequence, does not avoid a certain schematicism. One point where this is particularly apparent is in the approach to Coleridge and Wordsworth, whose writings Armstrong treats as entirely continuous with German *Frühromantik*, asserting without qualification, for example, 'the continuation of the tradition in British romanticism even after the origin of its conception of organicism, German idealism, revealed its underlying aporias' (183). However tempting this kind of claim

might be from Armstrong's theoretical perspective, from a historical perspective it is demonstrably untrue that British Romanticism's 'conception of organicism' originated in German Idealist philosophy, since it is to be found, for example, in such poems as Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*, written well before Kant's critiques. Armstrong's proneness to this kind of over-theorized claim reflects a major omission in his study, the lack of any attention to the scientific discourses from which, after all, the concept of organicism was borrowed by the philosophers.

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Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee and Peter J. Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 324. £50. ISBN 0521829194.

Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge presents a wealth of fascinating information: did you know, for example, that Captain Bligh's mission on the ill-fated *Bounty* was to bring breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies as a cheap food for slaves? That when Joseph Banks came home after accompanying Captain Cook on his first expedition to the South Seas, he 'had increased the number of known plant species by nearly 25 per cent' (36)? That the vogue for all things exotic revealed itself in the fashion for Malaysian tables in the houses of the English aristocracy, and in the transformation of Vauxhall Gardens, described as 'a pleasure resort south of London in which fashionable society congregated and made assignations', into a "'Tahitian" fantasy zone' (58, 59)? That the first Christian missionaries in Tahiti failed because the men kept running off with native women, before Joseph Banks authorized the sending of British women over as wives for them (120)? That in 1721 'six death-row criminals were inoculated' to gain their freedom (199)? This book is full of extraordinary historical facts and often very funny anecdotes, which again and again prove the connection between literature, science and travel in the Romantic period.

Whilst driven by historical incident of both scientific and cartographic discovery the authors carefully consider the way that such incidents are represented in the literature of the period, and such a study offers a very different map of Romanticism. William Cowper and Robert Southey feature at length here for example, alongside the more canonical Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Keats and the perhaps expected treatment of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. These figures are also joined by less well-known or critically-favoured writers, such as James Montgomery, Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Moore, William Jones, Thomas Medwin, Charles Lamb and Mary Howitt. A truly different terrain appears, one influenced crucially and deeply by the projects and successes of individuals whose importance in the creation of Romanticism has not been fully recognized until this book; among them, Joseph Banks, Benjamin Franklin, Edward Jenner, Mungo Parks, Joseph Priestley and Benjamin Rumford. Banks in particular is restored to his rightful place at the centre of an entire 'empire of knowledge', his house a repository of maps, drawings, books, botanists, engravers and writers (43). The book reveals how all-persuasive were what we would now call 'literature, science and exploration', how each were not 'simple or wholly separate entities', but 'social and political construct[s] [...] bound up with the history of imperialism'; in this book, none of these categories are 'viewed in isolation as a series of works of genius nor presented as a progress from incorrect to correct theories, but [are] studied as a collection of practices and rhetorics competing for authority in a complex social and political context' (3, 29).

It is interesting, then, that coherent strands which can be considered 'Romantic' do emerge from this study. This book repeatedly finds that when the Romantic era writer considers the world beyond Europe he is often 'looking beyond to see in', for example (5). In this era of change, when 'ideologies and stereotypes were in the process of being formed, often in conflict with each other and in contradiction with themselves' there was yet a coherence in the range of responses that emerged (7). The book tracks, using a particularly full and comprehensive perspective, the move from Romanticism to Victorianism, a trajectory from the rural or provincial radicalism of individuals to the metropolitan institutions 'dedicated to

social reform' (271). Indeed the term 'Romanticism' is further interrogated and defined by this book.

I found myself trying to work out in vain whether I could hear the individual voices of each of the three authors when reading the book. One effect of this kind of collaboration must be the impressive range of knowledge brought to bear on a subject dealt with in such an inclusive way. Chapters include such topics as 'Indian Flowers and Romantic Orientalism', 'Mental travellers: Banks, African exploration and the Romantic Imagination', 'Exploration, headhunting and race theory' and 'Theories of terrestrial magnetism and the search for the poles'. Rather than being confined to a single author, a specific location or one scientific discipline this book is able to draw on the range of interests and influences it deals with. It also contains no less than 23 illustrations, many of which are fascinating, from a photograph of a 'specimen collected on the *Endeavour* voyage, preserved between proof sheets of Addison's *Spectator* essay on *Paradise Lost*', to political cartoons, an engraving from Camper's works showing his 'rank order of facial angles', and portraits of Omai, a Tahitian merchant brought to England (36, 130). This book really does tell us more about Romanticism, resisting the limiting boundaries we have placed on our knowledge to reveal how far literature, science and exploration influenced and effected each other and helped create the world in which we now live.

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Jack R. Censer and Lynn Hunt, *Liberty, Fraternity, Equality: Exploring the French Revolution*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001. Pp. 212 (includes CD-ROM). Hb.: \$50.00, ISBN 0271020881. Pb.: \$19.95, ISBN 0271020873.

Michael P. Fitzsimmons, *The Night the Old regime Ended: August 4, 1789, and the French Revolution*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003. Pp. 245. \$49.95. ISBN 0271022337.

In 1978 François Furet, a former communist, published a collection of essays, *Penser la Révolution Française*, which sought to revise the dominant Marxist reading of the French Revolution as the working out of class conflict. By 1989, the year of the bicentennial of the Revolution, and of the velvet revolutions then taking place in Eastern Europe, the book, which was published in English in 1981 as *Interpreting the French Revolution*, was widely hailed as a classic. Influenced by Furet's summary rejection of Marxian analysis and his adoption of a broadly semiotic methodology, a new generation of historians began to focus on the autonomy of politics and ideology and, in particular, on the operations of language in revolutionary culture. 'Power', as the authors of *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* observe 'resided, it seemed, in words, not social class'. One of these authors, Lynn Hunt, is well known for her development of this thesis. In *Politics, Culture, and Class*, published in 1984, she aimed to show how language, rather than simply reflecting social reality, could be an instrument for transforming reality. The subsequent emphasis of the new cultural history on modes of representation, on the significance of rituals, engravings, songs, fictions, and theatrical displays, marked not only an extension of Furet's work, but also a major challenge. For while Furet argued that the Terror was implicit in the events of 1789, Hunt maintained that the plurality of revolutionary discourses in this period militated against such a reductive conclusion. As Keith Michael Baker would go on to claim, in *Inventing The French Revolution* (1990), the Terror marked the triumph of one type of political discourse over its rivals; revolutionary violence was not encoded in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, nor could it be traced to the constitutional flaws of the National Assembly, but was a consequence of the struggle between competing discursive forces. For while revolution undoubtedly brought terror to the newly forged citizens of France it also brought forth new claims for suffrage, not only from recognised members of the Third Estate, but also from women and from slaves.

In *Liberty, Fraternity, Equality*, intended as an entry point for students of the period, Hunt and her co-author Jack Censer pay particular attention to these latter claims. An entire chapter, for example, is dedicated to the Revolution in the Colonies and a strong emphasis is placed throughout on the contributions of women. While this reorientation of the period is to be welcomed, in a book of only 200 pages, large sections of which are given over to primary material, the attention to historical detail is inevitably compromised. There is no mention, for example, of key players such as Mirabeau or Talleyrand and Barras, and scant discussion of the National Assembly. Despite these reservations the book, as a whole, is well written, well organised, and thoughtfully presented. Each chapter concludes with a selection of key documents and there is an excellent accompanying CD-ROM, which contains some 400 texts, over 250 images, and 13 songs, maps, a glossary, a time line and other useful materials. Following a chapter on Napoleon, the book concludes with a helpful if rather short chapter on Legacies and Interpretations, which enables students to develop an informed perspective on the broadly culturist account they have just read. While some readers might bemoan the lack of attention given to the responses of British observers, and while the writing does occasionally sacrifice vivid description in the interests of brevity and coherence — some mention, for example, could have been made of the desecration of the Queen's apartment by the rioting women of Paris — as a first port of call, this book has much to recommend it.

While not aligned with the work of new cultural or discursive historians, Michael P. Fitzsimmons shares Hunt and Censer's emphasis on the positive implications of the French Revolution. In *The Night the Old Regime Ended* he argues, contra Furet, that the period from 1789-1791 was an authentically moderate phase of the Revolution. To support his thesis, Fitzsimmons draws attention away from the standard revolutionary moment, the fall of the Bastille on July 14, to focus instead on the significance of the meeting of the National Assembly on August 4. The book initiates a move, in other words, from the symbolic significance of insurrectionary violence to the practical effects of political debate. Broadly speaking, the meeting of the night of August 4 can be approached in two ways. The first approach emphasises the calculated nature of the event, with the deputies of the three estates agreeing to

renounce their privileges in exchange for cash compensation. Rather than being motivated by revolutionary enthusiasm, the participants appear, on this understanding, to be acting out of self-interest. The second, less cynical approach argues that the initial relinquishments became a catalyst for a wholly unprecedented surrender of privileges, which not even the most fervent revolutionaries could have anticipated. In other words what began as an attempt to curb the power of the clergy and the nobility soon developed into a fully-fledged programme of reform. Had the inclination of the Committee of the Constitution been followed, it is clear that, with the exception of the tax privileges of the clergy and nobility, the existing order would have remained largely intact. Yet even at this early stage – the Committee delivered its report on July 27 – the claim that the constitution would be rooted in universal rights rather than in privilege necessitated the end of the Old Regime.

What happened on the evening of August 4 is difficult to describe. The deputy Charles-Jean-Marie Alquier wrote to his constituents that one would have had to be there to have an idea of the enthusiasm and patriotism, which spread, like a shock wave through the Assembly. And later, Jean-Paul Rabaut would assert that only those who were present could understand the meeting. A sense of theatricality seems to have pervaded the event with relinquishments cascading in astonishing fashion, ‘each one seemingly more stunning than the one that had preceded it’. As the deputy Ambroise-Eulalie de Maurès commented, the meeting was ‘a combat of generosity between the first two orders and that of the commons’. Though Fitzsimmons does not pursue the possibility, there is a sense in which the revolutionary discourse of universality, disinterestedness, and equanimity served as a foil for an excessive display of *droit de seigneur*. The sense of ‘combat’, moreover, resonates with the powerful ambivalence of the potlatch, as discussed by Bataille. But whatever impulses drove the renunciations of privilege during the meeting – disinterestedness, self-destructiveness, political theatre – the outcome was a shared commitment to a new order no longer divided by privilege or self-interest.

Fitzsimmons is keen to stress the spread of commonality amongst the deputies. He notes that while the Assembly was undoubtedly dominated by extremes of

opinion, men who had no personal or political ambitions ultimately decided its business. The anonymity of these deputies contrasts, of course, with the cult of personality that would eventually convulse the Revolution. According to Fitzsimmons, the members of the Assembly ‘wanted to do what was best for France and cared not at all from which side of the Assembly proposals originated; indeed they were not ideologues and took great pride in their lack of *esprit de parti*’. Drawing support from the work of Timothy Tackett, he concludes that the vast majority of the deputies were motivated less by ideology than by a ‘strong strand of pragmatism’. Such a thesis runs against the idea, most recently promoted by the French historian Patrice Gueniffey that the Terror originated in the principles of the Assembly. Keen to exercise his own sense of pragmatism and moderation Fitzsimmons argues that the Assembly, unlike the National Convention, ‘did not resort to coercion and voluntarily yielded power – even to the extent of excluding members from continuing formal participation in national politics’. In spite of the degree of disappointment and division that issued in the wake of August 4, Fitzsimmons maintains that the Assembly, in contrast to the National Convention, succeeded in its aim to reform the polity with minimal recourse to bloodshed.

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Paul Keen (ed.), *The Popular Radical Press, 1817-1821*. 6 Vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003. Pp. 2,568. £525. ISBN 1851967524.

Paul Keen’s edition of the post-war radical journals captures a moment when, unknown to itself, Europe was experiencing the aftermath of the eruption of the Tambora volcano on the island of Sumbawa, Indonesia, in April 1815. There resulted a world wide climate change. Mary Shelley experienced Tambora’s chilly summer on Lake Lemman in 1816 but that autumn’s harvest failure also cast a long shadow over England’s economy. The devastating global aerosol not only brought about extensive harvest failure but arguably precipitated a dynamic phase in plebeian journalism.

Writing in *The Gorgon*, Richard Carlile warned that ‘in the distresses of 1816 and 1817, we had a decisive proof of the slender thread on which hangs the prosperity and welfare of the people.’ Although unaware of the greatest explosion in recorded history, Tambora caused Thomas Malthus to dust-off his discredited theories and publish the caveat-laden fourth edition of the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, fermenting a debate about the politics of land which flickered intermittently throughout the post-war radical press. The food price consequences of the eruption, assisted by the economic fall-out of returning de-mobbed soldiers, meant that 1816 ended with December’s Spa Fields uprising.

By the spring of 1817 the Government had suspended habeas corpus. Fearing arrest under its terms, William Cobbett discarded his *Political Register* and sought exile in America. It was into the vacuum caused by Cobbett’s departure that the journals reproduced here began to emerge. A second distinctive phase of their development is marked by Peterloo in 1819. *The Cap of Liberty*, *The White Hat* and *The London Alfred* were all conceived to orchestrate reaction to that event. Finally, a third moment can be identified in the consequences of Queen Caroline’s return from exile in 1820. By profoundly deconstructing loyalism, and providing an access route for women into political debate, the “Queen’s Business” drastically modified working class radicalism. Carlile was one of the few to have correctly predicted, three months before Caroline’s return, that ‘She has nothing to look to for protection, but the mass of the people. Every parasite will lift his venomous tongue against her.’ Ultimately, the Caroline affair would prove a turning point in radical history, forcing a male dominated radical movement to recognize the mobilization of women in her cause.

Paul Keen’s task for Pickering & Chatto was not to reproduce either Cobbett’s *Political Register* nor Carlile’s *Republican*. Instead, we get a broader and much less familiar range of journals. Reproduced in facsimile are: *Hone’s Reformists’ Register* (1 February 1817–25 October 1817); *The Yellow Dwarf* (3 January 1818–23 May 1818); *The Gorgon* (23 May 1818–24 April 1819); *The Gracchus* (27 June 1818: one issue); *The Cap of Liberty* (8 September 1819–5 January 1820); *The Briton* (25 September 1819–20 November 1819); *The Medusa* (20 February 1819–7 January

1820); *The Democratic Recorder* (2 October 1819: one issue) *The White Hat* (16 October 1819: one issue); *Theological Comet, Or, Freethinking Englishman* (24 July 1819–13 November 1819); *The London Alfred; Or People's Recorder* (25 August 1819–17 November 1819) and *The Radical Magazine* (1 February 1821–1 March 1821). I've concocted this catalogue of dates of publication because, curiously, Keen doesn't provide a table of the journals' duration. Hone's appetite for writing means that his *Reformists' Register* occupies most of the first two volumes. Other journals, such as Carlile's *Gracchus*, *The Democratic Recorder* and *The White Hat*, are designated by Keen as appearing as single issues. As he notes, only *The Briton* appears to have attempted to address the radical Christian reader.

However, *The Democratic Recorder* requires further investigation. My notes (which I've not had a chance to double check) indicate that a second issue (dated 11 October 1819) is located in the National Archives, Kew (N[ational] A[rchives] H[ome] O[ffice] 42/197). In issue No. 2, an article by 'Probus' claimed that the 'soldier in England is an armed citizen' and went on to advocate 'citizens with arms.' Such an attempt to seduce the soldiery may have been enough to force *The Democratic Recorder's* closure although it represents an intriguing attempt, post-Peterloo, to ameliorate the vilification of the military. This issue of *The Democratic Recorder* No. 2 sits in the same file as the Home Office's two copies of *The Democratic Recorder* No. 1. The surveillance system certainly ensured a plentiful collection of the radical press.

Keen is somewhat diffident on the complex matter of attributing editorial roles. Unaccountably, Keen fails to give *The Cap of Liberty's* editor as J. Griffin despite this information being supplied in *The London Alfred*. In Kevin Gilmartin's *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (1996), *The Gorgon's* editorship is attributed to James Wade but the first nine issues were 'Printed and published' by Carlile before the journal switched its printing to William Molineux and its publishing to John Fairburn. Finally, *The Gorgon's* last two issues were printed by W.T. Sherwin (who published *Sherwin's Weekly Political Register*). This bewildering, yet revealingly cohesive, culture of production was one

of the features which ensured the journals' evasion of the authorities. Nevertheless, editors were always under threat. Like Fairburn, *The Democratic Recorder's* co-publisher Thomas Dolby was already moving into the safer arena of theatrical imprints, using the corrupt monopolies of Covent Garden and Drury Lane as proxies for the reform debate. Significantly, issue No. 1 of *The Democratic Recorder* closed with an account of the arraignment of several 'Venders of Seditious Publications,' including Dolby and Carlile.

Keen's introductory essay (which supplements the separate introductions provided for each title) stresses the role of the radical journals as vehicles of education as well as engines of reform. He plays down much of the popular culture surrounding these journals, perhaps following the Advisory Editor, Kevin Gilmartin, who emphasizes the presence of univocal editorial lines, almost creating each radical journal as a tightly organized field of authored discourse. However, Hone also took great care to consult his fellow radicals. His account in the *Reformists' Register* of the Spencean role at Spa Fields was preceded by a personal letter tipping-off Thomas Evans that he would be referring to his pamphlet, *Christian Policy the Salvation of the Empire* (1816) (BM Add Ms 50746 fol. 1,13 December 1816). Nevertheless, Evans and his son were both arrested under the Suspension of Habeas Corpus. The implications of their case continued to percolate through much of the radical press well into 1818.

This dialogue with an explicit radical constituency was a principal reason why the post-war radical presses were more successful than their 1790s counterparts. The Society for the Suppression of Vice's hounding of Carlile simply resulted in *The Republican's* continuing its publication under his sister, Mary-Jane. When her own prosecution halted these efforts, she was succeeded by a legion of *ad hoc* male and female supporters. Far from being one-man bands, the radical journals of the late 1810s had become efficiently evasive of Government control. A Home Office spy discovered a group in a Nottingham tavern reading the '*Theological Comet, Republican, Medusa, Cap of Liberty, Black Dwarf* ... and other seditious & Blasphemous publications ...[which they] recommended with great warmth' (NA HO

42/197.fol.155). In other words, all five radical journals had reached their projected audience. They were not merely individual acts of political discourse but constitutions of an explicitly material radical culture transmitted through ties of kinship, friendship and ideological collaboration.

However, not all the journals reproduced here can be designated as radical. John Hunt's *Yellow Dwarf* apologized for having 'assumed a character more entirely political than it was in the contemplation of its projectors to give it.' For the most part, with William Hazlitt as a regular contributor, *The Yellow Dwarf* restricted itself to non-confrontational essays 'On the Lake School of Poetry,' a review of an edition of Chapman's Homer (presumably the one Keats used), a commentary on *Childe Harold*, 'Mr. Coleridge's Lectures,' '[The] Character of Crabbe,' 'Manners of the Hindoos,' 'The Polar ice and the Quarterly Review' and an extract from Keats's *Endymion*. Despite *The Yellow Dwarf's* flattering allusion to T.J.Wooler's *The Black Dwarf*, it remained more liberal than radical but it at least avoided the ignominy of the Government sponsored loyalist journal, *The White Dwarf*, which Carlyle contemptuously dismissed as given away 'gratis in ... all coffee-houses, taverns, and ale-houses ... for scarce a copy ever fetched fourpence.'

Each volume ends with an admirable set of notes identifying otherwise inexplicable events such as the March of the Blanketeers or the identity of the trumpeter leading the Yeomanry at Peterloo. Many of the intricacies of the period's radical culture are beyond the scope of the project although one soon becomes aware of the social changes the press helped initiate. Engagement with a specifically plebeian readership is announced in *The Gorgon's* series of articles on emigration and the condition of journeymen printers and type foundry workers. *The Gorgon's* research into these trades is a reminder that, far from being the simple instruments of their editors, the journals were produced by politically responsive workers. *The Gorgon* also introduced its readers to The Philanthropic Hercules, one of the earliest trade unions. Elsewhere, under the heading 'War on the Revenue,' *The Cap of Liberty* was one of the first journals to advocate responsible consumer discrimination and the tactical

avoidance of taxes when it promoted Radical Breakfast Powder as a coffee substitute (*The Cap* even joked that it might be explosive).

Keen's six volumes invite further research. There must surely be at least half a dozen PhDs in this one Pickering & Chatto set. The index gathered at the end of Volume 6 is substantial enough but, in practice, scarcely adequate to cover the intricacies of the print culture it attempts to tabulate: there is little to be done except explore for oneself. I notice *The Medusa* has several uncollected poems by the Spencean hairdresser Edward James Blandford while the *The Theological Comet* contains poetry and correspondence from the shoemaker, orator and caretaker, Allen Davenport, a radical whose trajectory from Jacobinism through to Chartism is discussed in Anne Janowitz's *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (1998). *The Medusa* is perhaps the most fascinating of the journals. The importance of its editor, Thomas Davison, is accurately identified although there is still much to be investigated. Davison worked concurrently from two printing presses, one in Whitefriars and another in Duke Street, Smithfield. In addition to *The Medusa*, Davison also printed *The Cap of Liberty* and *The Republican* at the Smithfield site, continuing the latter's publication even after Carlile's imprisonment until Davison himself was convicted for selling *The Republican* and *The Deists' Magazine*. Under the judiciary's policy of dispersing convicted radicals out of the metropolitan areas, Davison was confined to Oakham prison, Rutland, a spot also later used to incarcerate Carlile's associate, the hard-drinking and blasphemous Rev. Robert 'The Devil' Taylor. Meanwhile, Davison's Smithfield press was taken over by the female radical pressperson, Rhoda Helder. What hasn't been mentioned before as far as I'm aware is that, from the Whitefriars press, Thomas Davison was also John Murray's printer for nearly all of Lord Byron's output during the 1810s. Murray repeatedly contracted Davison to print Byron from the 1812 second edition of *Childe Harold* through to *Marino Faliero* in 1821. In other words, *The Medusa* and *The Cap of Liberty* were probably cross-subsidized by Davison's Byron contracts. No doubt Murray was unaware of this arrangement.

Paul Keen's timely selection of *The Popular Radical Press, 1817-1821* has the capacity to re-open a range of controversies surrounding our notions of plebeian political activism at the close of Jane Austen's otherwise apparently tranquil Regency. These journals disclose a forgotten world of radical activism. London's hidden corners and lost political intrigues are brought before us. The black presence was everywhere. On the last page of the final issue of *The London Alfred*, in a report of a meeting held in Finsbury market, the future Cato Street conspirator Arthur Thistlewood, and the already acquitted treason trial defendant Dr. James Watson, finished their speeches and gave place to Griffin, editor of *The Cap of Liberty*, and also to 'Mr. DAVISON, (*a man of colour*).' Both of them 'favoured' the assembly with further speeches. This was not Thomas Davison, the *Medusa* editor, but William Davidson, a black man hanged and quartered for his part in the Cato Street conspiracy. Like the ex-slave Robert Wedderburn, Davidson was widely recognized as a working class leader. The radical journals in Paul Keen's hugely important scholarly edition bring them back alive.

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Deidre Coleman, *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp 273. £45. ISBN 0521632137

Transatlantic slavery and the British Empire are now firmly established as two of the key historical institutions which lie beneath the cultural formation we call Romanticism. All Romantic texts, whether consciously or not, are now implicated in the global network of trade, geo-political conflict and consumption which fuelled both the slave trade and imperialism. But unlike many studies which use this perspective to find new interpretations of Romantic texts, Deidre Coleman's extremely interesting new book takes the theme of slavery and empire to (literally) new pastures. Her focus is on two British colonies which were established as a result of the cessation of America from the British Empire in the late 18th-century: Sierra Leone in West Africa,

designed for the resettlement of ex-slaves who had fought for Britain in the American war; and Botany Bay (Port Jackson), the new penal colony in Australia which replaced its Virginian predecessor. Drawing on a wide range of published and archival sources, Coleman shows that the conception of these colonies was deeply inflected with Romantic Utopianism and Utopian Romanticism. Rather like Coleridge and Southey's plans to establish Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna river, these far-flung places in Africa and Australia were imbued with republican notions of personal and political freedom, renewal, redemptive labour, pastoral innocence, organic communal values and secular salvation – the perfect antidote to the horrors of both slavery and urban crime and decay. But just as Pantisocracy floundered over arguments about servants and free love, a closer inspection of the Romantic colonialist imagination reveals an unstable if intriguing compound of myth, fantasy, projection and utilitarianism. Coleman draws on Foucault's model of the colony as a 'heterotopia of compensation' to explore the various kinds of economic, social and sexual fantasies which inspired but eventually undermined both colonies.

Africa, for example, was imagined as a place of limitless resources – this notion was crucial to the argument of abolitionists that a legitimate trade in goods rather than the expropriation of people was the solution to slavery. As Equiano put it (with a shrewd sense of what would now be called 'spin'), the end of slavery would turn Africa into an 'inexhaustible Source of Wealth'. But Coleman shows elegantly that this kind of 'mercantilist fantasy' (18) was a contradictory amalgam which looked 'forwards' to modern political economy and industrial capitalism and 'backwards' to primitivist myths of the African 'interior' as a 'tabula rasa' for 'European inscriptions' (14-15). Citing the work of Nigel Leask, Coleman points out that the trope of the 'innocent' or boundlessly fecund 'interior' which awaits European 'penetration' is a classic projection of patriarchal imperial values. This does not mean that all Romantic writers on colonization were conscious hypocrites (Equiano, for example, was a sincere advocate of miscegenation as the sexual equivalent of economic *laissez-faire*), but it does mean that their rhetoric was inevitably compromised by 'European inscriptions'. My favourite testimony in this context comes from Joseph Banks, who argued that Botany Bay convicts could not realise

their ‘reproductive potential’ unless they were supplied with women from the South Sea island of Otahaite. He proposed an excursion to the island in which the convicts ‘might, without imitating the Violence of a Roman Rape, bring from the superior race of Inhabitants in that Island a set of the most beautifully formed Women that the sun beholds...from the thoughtful Dispositions of the men and the gay unthinking cheerfulness of the women, a generation of Benevolent Beings might arise’ (25). As Coleman notes, this is closer to ‘pornotopia’ than colonialism.

The actual history of these two colonies was, of course, rather different from their Utopian conception. According to David Brion Davis, ‘anti-slavery was less about humanitarianism than about devising new forms of labour exploitation’ (28). Coleman’s account of the implementation of ‘new forms of labour exploitation’ in Sierra Leone and Botany Bay is too rich in both detail and insights to summarise in this short review. The Sierra Leone experiment lasted only 10 years, but it was a place organised around a visionary mix of scientific, zoological, political and religious theorizing about colonization. The entomologist Henry Smeathman compared the georgic perfection of the colony to a termite nest rather than the Virgilian beehive, while the Swedenborgians Wadstrom and Norkensjold struggled to realise their millenaral enthusiasm for a ‘free’ Africa in the face of growing demands for direct imperial rule. In Australia, the major ‘discourse of empire’ was chivalry, ‘the velvet glove which makes the iron fist of colonization and dispossession in New Holland more palatable’ (164-5). If Africa was a playground of radical fantasies, Australia was a model of Burkean, counter-revolutionary paternalism and anti-Rousseauism.

The circulation of tropes and ideas between the colonies and metropolitan centres provides compelling evidence for the existence of a global public sphere: Romanticism has now truly come of age.

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Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 278. £45. ISBN 0521781930.

Recent historical and literary studies edited, respectively, by Mark Jackson (*Infanticide: Historical Perspectives on Child Murder and Concealment, 1550-2000*) and Jennifer Thorn (*Writing British Infanticide: Child-Murder, Gender and Print, 1722-1859*), have highlighted continuities and changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth century legal, medical and print focus on the crime of child murder. Josephine McDonagh's book offers an important counterpart to these works, as it combines historical research with close readings of key texts to create an adept and detailed exploration of an act which, she argues, functioned as a form of cultural memory.

McDonagh uses the term 'child murder' to mean three different things. Although primarily denoting what people at the time called 'newborn-child murder' (in modern parlance, neonaticide), at times she is referring to the killing of older, even adult children, and occasionally the expression is used in relation to the 'violent death of any person who is represented as a child' (10). It is this 'flexibility in the conceptualization of such acts' (201) that allows the author to draw the links that she does between the individual, the family and the state. This is crucial to her argument, for it is not cases of murder that concern her but 'the *idea* of child murder as it circulated in society and through time' (5).

The book skilfully shows how – reflected in debates on other issues – this motif repeatedly appeared, and is therefore arranged chronologically, each chapter being devoted to one of the key 'moments' during which the idea of child murder emerged. The exposition is achieved by focusing on contemporary writings that encapsulate the theme. The stage is set in the 1720s by the opposing responses of Jonathan Swift and Bernard Mandeville to commercial modernity, the former seeing child murder as a sacrifice made for the common good and the latter as a necessarily selfish act. Then in the 1770s and 1780s child murder figured in complex debates about the nature of civilisation and primitive man, expressed in anthropological travel writings and philosophical works; it also served as a way of exploring masculine sentiment. With the advent of the French revolution the figure of the sexually

voracious woman came to symbolise social and political disorder, so that by the end of the eighteenth century two versions of the female child killer had emerged. The unmarried, destitute mother who acted from poverty and despair (exemplified by the central figure of Martha Ray in Wordsworth's poem 'The Thorn') is contrasted with the image of the cruel nurse (Dame Nature in Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population*), who kills the children of the poor to prevent mob rule and maintain social order.

The scene then shifts to the nineteenth century and the controversy that surrounded the 1834 New Poor Law (shaped in part by Malthusian concerns). In 1839 child murder emerged in the radical press as a motif of the 'systematic and alienating power of the state' (96) via the anonymous 'Marcus' pamphlets that alleged a government plot to kill off pauper children. The commercial theme is revisited in another account of child murder that circulated at this time, murder for burial insurance, in which texts by Carlyle, Edwin Chadwick, and Dickens are important. Surplus population is linked to economic progress.

The following chapter, the book's strongest, returns to the idea of child murder as a social problem, using George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) to explore what appeared to contemporaries to be an epidemic of infanticide in the 1850s and 1860s. McDonagh shows clearly how child murder allowed the text to raise issues of nation-building and British identity by focusing on memory, coming at the question by way of the Act of Union with Ireland and the Indian Mutiny. Chapter six focuses on the later decades of the century, when the idea of child murder as socially advantageous was played out in eugenic narratives which infused works by Darwin, Arnold, Hardy, New Women writers, and in birth control propaganda (female emancipation being an important corollary). At the turn of the twentieth century, McDonagh suggests, child murder had come to represent meaninglessness, as in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. A short final chapter considers England's relationship to Ireland. Medea, a recurring theme, is revisited one last time through George Egerton's allusion to the 'triumph of Mother Ireland' over her oppressor (194).

There is much here for the literary scholar and the historian, as the book situates an emotive theme within a wide-ranging cultural framework. However, readers interested in child murder should refer also to the works by Jackson and Thorn to gain a thorough understanding of what was, after all, a practice as much as an idea.

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Dafydd Moore (ed.), *Ossian and Ossianism*. 4 Vols. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Pp. 2,000. £500. ISBN 0415288932.

In 1981 with much enthusiasm and no little *naïveté* I launched an undergraduate course on James Macpherson. Such niceties as the distinctions between the 1765 and the 1773 editions, not to mention the Laing edition of 1805, did not impinge on my intellectual radar screen at that time. Copies of the Ossianic *oeuvre* were so hard to come by that any text at all would suffice, but further complications arose when I discovered that none of the so-called complete editions apart from Laing contained the *Fragments*, Macpherson's first Ossianic work. The only saving grace of those early years was that my students were all familiar to a greater or lesser degree with *An Fhianuigheacht*, the Ossianic cycle of Gaelic literature, and consequently had little difficulty in identifying the problems raised by the dispute on authenticity. Apart from Van Tieghem's excellent volumes, *Ossian en France* (1917) and *Le préromantisme; études d'histoire littéraire européenne: T.I, la notion de vraie poésie, La mythologie et la poésie Scandinaves, Ossian et l'Ossianisme* (1924), critical commentary was at a premium and of little help to students who could not read French. Given the dearth of secondary material in English, the programme perforce concentrated on a close reading of Macpherson's texts and comparing them with genuine Ossianic literature, a *felix culpa* that at least saved us from the accusation of taking Macpherson seriously while ignoring the texts themselves. The popular perception of Macpherson at the time is best indicated by his inclusion in a feature article in *Time* on 16 May 1983 under the heading 'Fakes that have skewed history', and I hope that my students were

able to discover for themselves that the situation was rather more complicated than that depicted by the mandarins of *Time*.

Then in the second half of the 1980s Ossianic studies took a turn for the better with the names of Howard Gaskill and Fiona Stafford immediately springing to mind. The former started the trend with an aptly entitled article “‘Ossian’ Macpherson: towards a rehabilitation’, published in *Comparative Criticism* in 1986. Fiona Stafford’s biography appeared a year later, to be followed by a second biography by Paul deGategno in 1988. Gaskill edited an important volume on Ossianic studies in 1991, *Ossian Revisited*, and then embarked on producing a new edition of the Ossianic corpus, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*. Published by Edinburgh University Press in 1996 and containing an introduction by Fiona Stafford, this was the first time that the entire corpus of Macpherson’s Ossianic writing was embraced within a single edition. The question of accessibility having been finally solved as far as the poems themselves were concerned, this volume has proved indispensable to academics, students and the general public alike. Not content to rest on his laurels, however, Gaskill combined with Fiona Stafford to edit another important volume of Ossianic commentary, *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* in 1998 and then edited a broad-ranging collection of essays in 2004, *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*.

Dafydd Moore is another scholar who has written extensively and persuasively on Macpherson over the last ten years but now he has surpassed himself with a monumental four volume work entitled *Ossian and Ossianism*. Taking up Fiona Stafford’s suggestion that the frequent repetition of tired myths and half truths about Ossian is due to the inaccessibility of many of the most important texts involved, Moore has trawled through the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, and the libraries of Blair College Aberdeen and of The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland in an effort to remedy this defect, but, having harnessed a most impressive array of these hitherto inaccessible documents, the editor is surely far too modest in stating his aspirations:

While it might be naïve to expect that these volumes will eradicate the myths surrounding Ossian, they will at least make the evidence harder to ignore, and contribute to the general establishment of Ossian as a major work in the eighteenth century that requires more than paying lip-service to the fact (Vol. I, xxiii).

As well as the texts themselves, *Ossian and Ossianism* is enhanced by a general introduction that is much more a detailed and perceptive commentary on what follows than a mere introduction; one that repays, if it does not actually necessitate, frequent rereading in conjunction with the relevant material. Volume I contains a sample of Macpherson's attempts at composing original verse in English as well as his first Ossianic venture, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760). Moreover, in order to demonstrate that Ossian did not appear like a bolt from the blue, Moore also includes Alexander Macdonald's preface to his *Ais-Eiridh na Sean Chánon Albannich* ('The Resurrection of the Ancient Scottish Language'), an anthology of Macdonald's poetry published in Edinburgh in 1751, and the very first anthology of Gaelic poetry in either Scotland or Ireland to be published in book form. Despite being the leading Gaelic poet of the 1745 Insurrection, Macdonald's work is notable for the absence of fatalistic gloom often associated with Celtic literature, while his introduction deals with a people and language not remotely and exotically decayed but forcefully excluded from modernity by contemporary politics. Macpherson's view of the primitive poet as a genius taught by nature remote from the arts of civilisation, finds no support from his earlier contemporary. While Macdonald did not undertake a description of the actual qualities of Gaelic verse, Jerome Stone's views on the aesthetics of the primitive are at one with those of Macpherson. Stone's views were expressed in a letter accompanying his *Albin and the Daughter of Mey*, the first translation of a Gaelic ballad to appear in English. Stone's version was published incidentally in *The Scots Magazine* in January 1756, the journal in which Macpherson's attempts at poetry in English also appeared. Moore's detailed analysis of Stone's translation underlines the liberties he felt impelled to take with his original in order to convey the niceties of Gaelic verse to an English reader, thus providing a suitable context for assessing Macpherson's career as a translator.

Volume II reproduces the first editions of *Fingal* and *Temora*, and ‘should be read as an essential companion to, but not a straight replacement for Gaskill’ (li). In offering a facsimile reproduction rather than a re-set text, Moore intends recreating the impression Ossian made on its earliest readers, even at the expense of reproducing pages of ‘minimal Ossian, and maximal Macpherson, not to mention Homer and Virgil’ (Gaskill, *Poems of Ossian*, xxv). He draws attention to Macpherson’s denial of boundaries in his use of footnotes, notes that are simultaneously part of the text and distinct from it, introducing more complicated ideas without detracting from the simplicity of the poetry itself. The editor cautions his readers, however, to bear in mind that *Temora* was not produced in a vacuum but within the context of a response to *Fingal*. Moore’s reproductions of Macpherson’s notes and dissertations, as well as his own helpful analysis of the same, is of vital importance in helping the reader to evaluate the initial critical and creative responses to Ossian that make up Volumes III and IV respectively.

In his selection of critical writings, Moore gives priority to documents that are not otherwise easily available. This means the omission of private correspondence from such luminaries as Walpole, Gray and Percy. It also entails the omission of Johnson’s famous attack on Ossian in his *Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775), David Hume’s ‘On the Genuineness of Ossian’s Poems’ (1775), and Macpherson’s own preface to the revised edition of Ossian (1773). Despite its availability in Gaskill’s *Poems of Ossian*, Moore has included an abridged version of Hugh Blair’s *Critical Dissertation*, precisely because of its absolute centrality to the reception of *Ossian*. Comprising fifty three items in all from 1760 to 1827, they are grouped under four headings in the introduction: the authenticity myth; critical judgements and critical statements; cultural politics; the Irish question. I was particularly pleased to find that Moore has included substantial extracts from Henry Mackenzie’s *Highland Society of Scotland’s Report on the Poems of Ossian* (1805). Over the years my own experience has brought me to the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Ireland, the rare books room of University Library, Cambridge in search of this key work on Ossianic scholarship. Things eased

considerably when my own university library was fortunate to procure a copy of this volume in 1995 but naturally enough access to this rare volume was still somewhat restricted. The inclusion of a number of very well-chosen extracts from this report by Dafydd Moore in *Ossian and Ossianism*, however, will bring the substance of Mackenzie's work to a much wider audience than heretofore. In drawing attention to significant differences between an undated testimonial by Ewan Macpherson and his testimonial to The Highland Society in 1800, Moore argues that the HSR was not as neutral in its approach as we have been led to believe. Of equal interest is the appearance for the first time of some of the letters collected by Blair in an effort to answer Hume's request for convincing evidence as to the poems' authenticity. Also noteworthy is the conclusion emerging from the first reviews of Macpherson's work that the question of authenticity did not become a major forensic issue until the end of the 1760s.

Volume IV, *The Creative Response*, deals with adaptations of Ossian for the stage and for publication in verse. Moore notes that Macpherson's works were exceptional for the number of stage works they inspired from tragedy to opera, from choral masque to ballet pantomime. It is significant that while many of the theatrical adapters tried to present Macpherson *verbatim* on stage, the poetical adapters demonstrate the opposite. In the months prior to the publications of the *Fragments* in June 1760, some of the material was circulating in manuscript form. The evidence indicates that Macpherson's initial attempts were written in verse and that the decision to opt for rhythmical prose was taken quite late in the day, a change that only entailed changing the alignment of the text, but one that proved a master stroke regarding its reception. It is ironic that while Macpherson changed from verse to rhythmical prose, his adapters felt inspired to change from rhythmical prose to verse. Fragment V was of particular interest to early versifiers, with four versions appearing in print before February 1761, the earliest of them completed only a fortnight after the publication of the *Fragments*. Fragment V was also the earliest Ossianic piece to appear in French. While virtually every English poet of note between 1760 and 1830 tried his hand at Ossianics, Moore's researches draw attention to the number of second rate admirers of Macpherson who found in his work 'material to ruin'. The

sheer amount of these ‘well-meaning but limited adapters’ is a clear indication of *Ossian’s* status as a contemporary classic. While modern scholarship sees Macpherson’s balance between martial prowess and sentimental suffering as one of the great attractions of *Ossian* to eighteenth-century readers, this view has to be set against the evidence of an adapter like John Woodrow (1769–71) who upgraded the muscular at the expense of the sentimental. It is also bears noting that early nineteenth-century versifiers were much more reluctant to take liberties with Macpherson’s text than their colleagues in the 1760s.

Dafydd Moore has served scholarship superbly with this painstaking assembly of inaccessible texts, though critics will need time to digest this material and evaluate its implications for our understanding of Macpherson. Since the understandable expense of this work will limit its purchase to institutions, I wonder if the editor would consider publishing his introduction as a separate volume. Not only undergraduates, but also all those interested in Ossianic studies, would benefit from such a move.

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Grant F. Scott, *Joseph Severn: Letters and Memorials*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. Pp. 716. £45. ISBN 0754650146.

There has never been a modern scholarly edition of Joseph Severn’s letters. While this fact may seem surprising, the critical gaze has rarely been attracted to the painter in his wider context, preferring to concentrate instead on his role in Keats’s voyage to Italy in 1821. Like other Keats acquaintances – such as once-fashionable but now obscure poet, Barry Cornwall – Severn has been almost wholly subsumed into other Romantic stories. Of course, there can hardly be a better story than that of the dying Keats and his faithful companion Severn. As Scott remarks in his introduction: ‘Severn’s great love for Keats and his devotion to the poet’s memory . . . ensure his fame but have come to impede any genuine assessment of his character or career’ (3).

By returning to view almost 180 letters – some 130 published here for the first time – written or received by the indomitable painter between 1820 and 1879, Scott gives an enormous boost to those who wish to re-evaluate Severn, not to mention other members of Romanticism's supporting cast who appear in his correspondence.

To close the curtains on Severn in February 1821, Scott comments, is to effect 'perhaps the most dramatic foreshortening of any life in literary history' (1). Like Cornwall, Severn survived into the last quarter of the nineteenth century, becoming one of Romanticism's 'last men'. In addition to the life that emerges from the Romantic-period correspondence, there is, indeed, a fascinating Victorian Severn to be recuperated from these letters, particularly from the recently rediscovered collection covering 1833-1861 – years neglected in William Sharp's *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* (1892). We learn, for example, much about Severn's friendship with William Gladstone, his connection to John Ruskin, and his service as British Consul to Rome from 1861 to 1872 (by all accounts, Severn regularly overstepped his authority, much to the chagrin of both the British government and embarrassed members of his family). Scott's volume also offers scholars an opportunity to rethink Severn's status as a commercial artist. Although Severn is routinely dismissed as a poor draughtsman, the materials presented here allow a rather different image of a versatile and successful painter enjoying a thriving career in Rome during the 1820s and 30s, and exhibiting regularly at the Royal Academy.

Scott's edition sheds interesting light, too, on the Keats-Severn legend. While the standard nineteenth-century response to the doomed dyad was practically to canonize the painter for his selflessness, Scott allows us to engage more thoroughly with a contemporary counter-current of antipathy towards the young painter and his largely self-publicized message of personal sacrifice. In a letter to John Taylor dated 14 April 1821, Isabella Jones – Keats's 'Hastings lady' – denounces Severn's 'cant of sentiment' (150). Her scepticism was shared by Henry Edward Fox (later Lord Holland), who viewed Severn as a 'provoking little cox-comb' out to get all he could from the Keats connection. Indeed, Fanny Brawne's refusal to meet Severn on his return from Italy in 1838 can perhaps be attributed to dislike, rather than to the fear of

being overpowered by ‘deep emotion’ on receiving her fiancé’s deathbed companion – Severn’s own characteristically positive gloss on the snub (535).

Reading Scott’s volume, we gain a vivid sense of Severn the man – restless, untidy, garrulous and vain; yet also industrious, aspiring, humane and loyal. It was a confounding mixture, and one which certainly frustrated his friends. Severn could also be disarmingly candid, as we gauge from an 1822 letter to Charles Brown. Following a spell of ‘13 days illness in bed’, Severn reports – at length – how, after suffering continual diarrhoea the previous year, he had now been ‘constipated in bowels . . . so that 3 days scarce went without Physic’; he comments on the colour of his ‘evacuations’, and describes being ‘opened’ with clysters by Dr Clark. But in addition to peripheral, if entertaining, details of this kind, there are important insights to be gained from the newly available letters, including more information on the illegitimate child Severn fathered shortly before sailing to Italy with Keats – an incident which possibly illuminates the psychological imperatives underlying Severn’s readiness to accompany Keats on his voyage.

One of this edition’s great strengths derives from Scott’s decision, taken in the worthy tradition of H. E. Rollins’s *The Letters of John Keats* (1958), to retain Severn’s idiosyncrasies of orthography and capitalization, and to log cancelled words. As a consequence, the letters – bearing traces of false starts, extensive underlining, and heavy use of terminal dashes in lieu of other forms of punctuation – communicate a tremendous sense of Severn’s energy, humour and resilience. With its detailed introduction, wealth of often unpublished contextual materials, numerous plates of hard-to-access paintings and sketches, helpful inclusion of current manuscript locations of letters, not to mention an admirably full index, *Joseph Severn: Letters and Memorials* is an enviable scholarly achievement, which perfectly balances thoroughness with readability. Scott has opened an illuminating narrative into the life of one of the most neglected, yet interesting, of Keats’s close friends, and his edition will be richly mined in subsequent accounts of nineteenth-century literary and artistic culture.

Richard Marggraf Turley

Susan Manly (ed.), Maria Edgeworth, *Harrington*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004. Pp. 324. £8.99. ISBN 1551114070.

There are perhaps two well-known facts about *Harrington* (1817). The first, immediately mentioned by the introduction to this edition, is that it was written in response to a letter by a young Jewish-American woman. Rachael Mordecai was distressed by Edgeworth's use of anti-Semitic stereotypes; Edgeworth acknowledged the justice of her comments and immediately set about making 'atonement and reparation' (299). The second, more troubling fact is that both Rachel and her father were perturbed by the novel's ending, in which the heroine, Berenice, is finally revealed to be, not a Jew, but a Christian. This concern is echoed by modern-day commentators on the novel, as Manly makes clear in the penultimate section of the introduction, where she gives an extensive recapitulation of current scholarly debate. Yet, while Manly mentions the 'symbolic expunging of the Other in the narrative's marital resolution,' for much of the introduction this difficulty remains out of sight (46).

Instead, she focuses, perhaps more positively, on Edgeworth's attempt to replace a false or 'prejudiced' inheritance, in which Jews are seen as Shylocks or Jessicas, with a more liberal, and rational, discourse. Manly begins by providing much-needed context, particularly in terms of reactions to the 1753–54 debate over the Jewish Naturalisation Act (which forms the background to *Harrington*'s childhood phobia) and the Gordon Riots of 1780 (by which time *Harrington*'s attitude has completely reversed). This background allows appreciation of Edgeworth's novel as an exploration of distinct varieties of prejudice, with *Harrington*'s father as an example of shire Tory hostility; and the Coates family (in their vulgarity rather like the Branghtons in Frances Burney's *Evelina* [1778]) as representative of the City of London merchant class. This context also illuminates Edgeworth's interest in exploring parallels between the position of the Jews in England and the Catholics in Ireland. Manly suggests that Edgeworth's stance on toleration was influenced by John

Toland, Irish author of the 1714 pamphlet *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland*. In particular, she discusses his *Letters to Serena* (1704), in which he, like Edgeworth, explores ‘The Origin and Force of Prejudices’.

For Edgeworth these ‘prejudices’ are caused by Harrington’s education and, more broadly, by the web of anti-Semitic allusions in which he is initially caught. Manly notes Edgeworth’s critique of the portrayal of Jews in children’s literature (literature that includes Edgeworth’s own *Moral Tales* [1801]). Following Richard Cumberland’s *The Jew* (1794) and Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise* (1779), Edgeworth attempts to revise old literary stereotypes, focussing in particular on the eighteenth-century theatre and Charles Macklin’s performance of Shylock. Yet, while Edgeworth gives a strong sense of the impact (and potentially hurtful effect) of Macklin’s performance, this edition demonstrates how the author simultaneously insists upon an alternative system of allusions. Manly contends that Edgeworth had read not only Isaac D’Israeli’s 1798 article on Moses Mendelssohn (possibly the article given to Harrington in the novel), but also Mirabeau’s essay. In Manly’s account, Harrington’s education and struggle with nervous disorder reflect Mendelssohn’s own experiences. The education that Mendelssohn’s biography begins is then continued by the cosmopolitan Montenero, until Harrington is able to overcome both his fear of Jews and his excessive enthusiasm. Harrington is cured by practical education, that is, personal experience and accurate biography (a position reminiscent of Edgeworth’s *Helen* [1834], where, praising Dumont’s *Mémoires de Mirabeau* Lady Davenant emphasises the importance of truth and integrity to literature).

While rightly focussing on the book’s religious politics, to the enterprising student Manly’s introduction offers a number of ways of approaching Edgeworth’s novel. It provides, for example, an interesting comparison of *Harrington* and *Ivanhoe* (1819), both texts that Manly interprets as ironizing the common understanding of British history. It also briefly touches on *Harrington*’s close relationship to Edgeworth’s other writings and to contemporary radical thought (although parallels with gothic fiction remain unmentioned). In fact, this is an extremely useful edition, with full and scholarly notes, supported by a judicious choice of supplementary material in the appendices. As one might expect, these include pertinent correspondence between Rachel Mordecai and Edgeworth, and contemporary

reviews. Selection from works by John Toland and from Isaac D'Israeli's *Monthly Magazine* article on Moses Mendelssohn also add to the sense of context.

Perhaps the only peculiarity, then, is Manly's uneasy treatment of the novel's conclusion. She does not, for instance, examine Edgeworth's own explanation. Although Edgeworth passes over the matter in her reply to Rachel Mordecai, in the novel *Harrington*, his father and Mr Montenero are all made to reflect that 'difference of religion between man and wife... is a very serious objection indeed' (290). Rachel Mordecai felt that 'the obstacle [Berenice's Jewishness] presented to her union with *Harrington*' was not sufficient to explain Edgeworth's decision. Still, however problematic, this aspect of the novel's argument is worth exploration.

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Paul Douglass, *Lady Caroline Lamb: A Biography*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Pp. 354. £16.99. ISBN 1403966052.

In 1810, Coleridge likened biography to idle gossip: 'both the authors and admirers of such publications, in what respect are they less truants and deserters from their own hearts... than the most garrulous female chronicler of the goings-on of yesterday in the families of her neighbours and townsfolk?' At this time, quite possibly, there was no one more gossiped about in Society than Lady Caroline Lamb. Biographies of Lamb have always focused on the life story of the person Byron called an 'exaggerated woman' and made use of gossip and apocrypha as fact. Previous works on Lamb have supported John Updike's theory that 'celebrity is a mask that eats into the face'.

Paul Douglass's biography is the first to foreground the Romantic writer over the 'Byron woman' who descended into 'erotomania'. Douglass skilfully brings together the famous chapters in Lamb's life — marriage to the man who would become Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister, extra-marital affairs, Byron, mental health problems, and the 'madness of writing' — and combines this with new,

meticulously researched, evidence of her life outside these events and with a narrative rich in social, political, and cultural context. Unlike other biographies of Lamb, Douglass's 'Byron' chapter is among the shortest in the book. (His chapter on 'Playing Byron', an issue much more important to Lamb's work, is one of the longest.) Sean Manchester's *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know: The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb* (1992), features several chapters in which Lamb is not mentioned. Henry Blyth's *Caro: The Fatal Passion* (1972), has eight chapters on Lamb and seven on Byron.

Douglass's biography works hard to prove that 'Lady Caroline played a role in changing the possibilities for women of the nineteenth century' (xi). The critically-overdue thesis of the biography is clearly presented in the Preface:

The overreaction of criticism to Caroline's literary offenses seems itself mildly hysterical, like her biographers' obsession with her outrageous entrances, temper tantrums, and crockery-smashing. Those who have judged her novels and poetry have treated them as an extension of her personality [...]. This does no justice to her as a writer or human being' (xiii).

Douglass's erudition arguably makes this the first literary biography of Lamb and has excellent chapters on her later novels, neglected poetry, and the music of *Glenarvon*. Douglass also makes good use of unpublished texts not previously discussed as part of Lamb's literary corpus, such as her amusing and scholarly letters and the writerly experiments within the commonplace books in the John Murray archive. It is a testament to the ingenuousness of the biography that it mentions works by Lamb that have now been lost or are still unpublished, such as 'Rose & Mary', 'Charles & Julia' and the pocket diary 'Penruddock', as well as selected poems and songs. This new, wider, and varied literary corpus supports the idea Lamb conceived of herself, and which has been obscured by gossip, scandal, and Byronism: that she was a working woman writer. Lamb had consciously attempted to establish herself as a serious author ('By Heavns I'm sick of Dissipation / And want some serious occupation' [97]), and Douglass includes discussions of her literary circle, which

included Byron, Lady Morgan, Godwin, Blake, Rogers, Moore, Foscolo and de Staël, in evidence of this. By focusing on Lamb's own writing, rather than gossip about her, Douglass allows Lamb to speak for herself.

One of the main themes of this work is the underlying exploration of why Lamb has been ignored by 1980s feminist revisionism and '90s studies of Romanticism and gender. Several scholars have agreed Lamb is 'supremely Romantic' or 'genuinely talented' but this has not motivated a full-length critical study of her work. Douglass's final sentence that Lamb had 'become that anomalous thing: a lady writer' (287), is telling. The idea that Lamb was a 'lady writer' is the reason for her anomaly: her class excluded her from professional authorship, thus her writing and her ambition were viewed as illustrative of aristocratic eccentricity and madness, motivated by emotional distress. The theory that Lamb was only motivated to write after her affair with Byron was damaging to her literary reputation as her works were viewed as hysterical obsession. The discussion of Lamb's early writing works to dispel this archaic judgement, and the effects of the Byron *affaire* upon her work are treated sensitively and sensibly. It is unfortunate that after all the evidence offered in this book, a review on the dust-jacket reverts to the idea that 'Lady Caroline Lamb – rather than her most famous lover Byron – was truly "mad, bad and dangerous to know".'

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Kari E. Lokke, *Tracing Women's Romanticism: Gender, History and Transcendence*. London: Routledge, 2004. Pp. 199. £70. ISBN 0415339537.

Lokke's study primarily serves to map what she calls a cosmopolitan tradition of nineteenth-century idealist novels written by women Romantic writers. This tradition, Lokke argues, provides a platform for such writers to both explore, and also feminize, subjects such as historiography, aesthetics and the visionary, regarded as they are as the domain of men, not women; poetry, not the novel. Focusing as she does on women

novelists, Lokke presents a distinctly European picture of Romanticism, here explicated through readings of Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), Mary Shelley's *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* (1823), Bettine von Arnim's *Briefroman Die Gündertode* (1840) and George Sand's *Consuelo* (1842-4). What emerges from the study is how each of these novelists employ a quasi-mystical language to reflect on their own engagement with female genius, Romantic enthusiasm, spiritual transcendence and revolution. For Lokke, women's interest in the latter is markedly different from their male contemporaries, each of the novelists discussed here seeking to 'envisage how the world might look had the Revolution succeeded in implementing its original republican and egalitarian aims and to imagine the collective psychic changes that would be necessary for that implementation.'

Corinne, for example, is read as a response to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*: while structured like a *bildungsroman*, the novel transforms the progressive linearity with which this genre is traditionally associated to grant, not just the hero, but also marginal or sacrificial figures, a perspective and a voice. While for the male hero, expectations of marriage and a middle-class profession tend to be gradually fulfilled in this genre, the female characters featuring in the novels in question here reject such convention for a narrative of 'female self-discovery.' For Lokke, while such self-discovery tends to lead Romantic women poets, Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, Karolina Pavlova, for example, into a paralysis of heart ache and dejection, her novelists incorporate their feelings of disappointment into a wider sense of self. A broken heart, then, becomes a catalyst for the cultivation of a newly clarified awareness of history, politics and spiritual belief, an awareness that is suspicious of the indulgent melancholy of male Romanticism. Lokke is perhaps too harsh on the predominantly gentle and hopeful work of Wordsworth, just as she chooses to overlook the more politically charged poetry of Hemans and Landon. But her acknowledgement of the female communities her novelists explore is fascinating, Lokke laying bare the interplay of double or multiple narratives that tell the stories of numerous women's interrelated lives and past experiences.

The way these women retell the past is partly achieved, Lokke observes, by their ability to assume a historian identity she compares with that formulated by

Michel de Certeau, one defined by a claim ‘to reencounter lived experience, exhumed by virtue of a knowledge of the past’ (*The Writing of History*). Attempting to revive or resurrect the past in this way accounts for the more Gothic or uncanny moments played out in the novels, just as it implicitly critiques those empiricist and positivist histories which have largely excluded questions involving women. History thus becomes about social endeavour and the practice of politics rather than a look back to a vanishing point or a look forward to unapproachable ideals. Turning away from both antiquarian myth and ideas of Enlightenment progress, Lokke’s subjects invest in an aestheticized and spiritualized poetic optimism, or enthusiasm, able to challenge and undermine the authority of Romantic melancholy, or pessimism. In one of the book’s critically significant moments, Lokke shows how female enthusiasm departs from its male tradition wherein it connotes excessive religious belief or passion. Staël, for example, presents enthusiasm as an experience which allows for women to attain a big picture perspective on historical and philosophical ideas, without getting swept away by passion or obsession. Moreover, the spiritual self such an understanding of enthusiasm allows for is that very identity which founds modernist explorations of female subjectivity, an idea Lokke forwards in her Epilogue on Isak Dinesen’s ‘The Dreamers’ from *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934). Here, Dinesen is presented as a writer intent on deflating the ‘self-important posturing and melancholy brooding of the stereotypical Romantic artist,’ an attack fuelled by her inheritance of a lively, collective, and confident female Romanticism.

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Kristin Flieger Samuelian (ed.), Jane Austen, *Emma*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004. Pp. 453. £ 4.99. ISBN 155111321X.

Paula Byrne (ed.), *Jane Austen’s Emma: A Sourcebook*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Pp.161. £ 14.99. ISBN 415286514.

Bharat Tandon, *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation*. London: Anthem, 2003. Pp. 303. £ 18.95. ISBN 184331102X.

These three books are rich additions to the growing Jane Austen library. Samuelian, Byrne, and Tandon write graceful, fluent prose with a natural and easy erudition. They have different assignments, though in some respects the two *Emma* books, a critical edition and a critical reference, have comparable, overlapping features. I shall begin with them.

Kristin Flieger Samuelian, from George Mason University in Virginia, has prepared a well-informed and engaging edition of Jane Austen's fifth novel, *Emma*. If a goal of a critical edition is student accessibility, I would commend Broadview for positioning the notes as genuine footnotes, rather than as a compendium of endnotes stashed inconveniently after the text, as is the case with the edition that I assume is one of this book's chief competitors, the Oxford World's Classics edition (rev. 1998). And, to help ascertain the superior edition of *Emmas*, including the third edition of the Norton Critical Edition (2000), I compared the footnotes. If an uninformed student were to read this wonderful novel for the first time, what would that reader need to have elucidated? The Oxford has the fewest footnotes, identifying mostly card games, novels, quotations, towns, furniture. Norton is more prodigal with its explanations, including R. W. Chapman's textual commentary from his definitive edition (rev. third ed., 1933). Samuelian's footnotes, in contrast, for the most part cover all that her predecessors have clarified plus interesting linguistic and historical tidbits.

One quibble I have with Broadview, also reflected in Norton, is the perceived need to footnote words such as 'valetudinarian' which can be found in a standard dictionary. Footnotes are always intrusive, and I respect only the most necessary interventions. However, I would salute such notes as Samuelian's discussion of the piano manufacturer Broadwood, from whom Frank Churchill purchases the mystery present for Jane Fairfax; here the editor provides an abbreviated history of the piano, which is applicable to any Austen novel. Similarly, she usefully explicates the niceties of which lady begins a dance or leads guests to dinner, which Austen deploys in

various novels to impale a character's superciliousness. In brief, Broadview's notes are solid.

Its remaining apparatus is unique and salutary. Besides a chronology of Austen's life, more thorough than Norton's generally and Oxford's usually; a concise but helpful bibliography, less inclusive than Norton's or Oxford's; and an introduction, Broadview offers six peerless appendices. Subjects include a textual history and selected early critical notices and then imaginatively expands to the reader and scholar's advantage. Contemporaneous and historical documents abound: on the Knightley family's estate; on gypsies from Cowper's poetry and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*; on the rights or lack thereof of illegitimate children from Blackstone's *Commentaries*; on being a governess and some advertisements for the position; and on illness and apothecary training, this last item illuminating a disagreement between Mr. Woodhouse and his similarly hypochondriacal elder daughter Isabella and her husband, as well as the social rise of Mr. Perry, which is a dimension of the social changes behind the novel as a whole. All of these appendices enlighten the texture of the novel and bring to life much in which Austen embeds her novel, and which her original audience would have recognized.

The introduction assiduously opens up the novel. Supported in the appendices, it considers such issues as birth, position, society, ill-health, and wealth. In particular, Samuelian very instructively decodes what 'gentleman' came to connote for the period's literature and history, which unifies and situates virtually all of the male characters. Not to be forgotten, the place of women, too, is under review. From what being a governess means for Mrs. Weston and Jane Fairfax to the social status of women, Samuelian examines the social realities of *Emma's* world, saying, 'If it can be said to be "about" one thing, and that is a tall order for any novel, especially for one as complex as *Emma*, it is about the effort to maintain and perpetuate a particular culture—that of the rural gentry—in the face of impending social change. The topic of health provides one useful avenue for exploring both change and resistance to change' (43), an exploration that the introduction directs. This is a fine edition, which I have ordered for a survey class this fall.

A parallel text is *Jane Austen's Emma: A Sourcebook*, edited by Paula Byrne. Again, I applaud genuine footnotes and a sturdy critical survey. There is a chronology here, too, which admits national events of Austen's lifetime. A section of 'Contemporary Documents' reproduces some of the same articles found in Broadview, though here virtually no excerpt is longer than a page and a half, and Broadview includes longer portions of Scott's 1815 review and More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*. Comparing the selections, I prefer the longer versions because their length augments their arguments.

Additionally, *The Sourcebook* presents 'Modern Criticism', choice samples from probably all the leading commentators on *Emma* from James and Bradley to Harding, Wilson, Leavis, Kettle, Mudrick, Trilling, Schorer, Booth, Duckworth, Butler, Brown, Gilbert and Gubar, Johnson, McMaster, Bate, and Southam, followed by a selection about cinema *Emma*. These certainly pinpoint the conflicting readings to which the novel has been subjected through the twentieth century, but, while inviting, such abstracts are finally no substitute for the entireties. However, a counter to this objection is that the editor provides a running commentary in highlighted text and through the footnotes which summarizes missing parts, sews these excerpts together, and provides, in effect, a unified argument, implicit perhaps through much of these readings but finally more apparent in the last part of the book. Byrne defends Emma's charity, for instance, against those whom she identifies as Marxist critics who castigate perceived thoughtless slumming, and also as 'a contrast to the idealization of the poor in the sentimental novel' (116). In short, 'Austen, far from being just a "miniaturist", was engaging with the political, literary and social climate of her time' (36). Thus, Byrne finds the purview of *Emma* not so much an internalized personal and social world but an externally focused, politicized realm, as the elements of its chronology suggest. This is an *Emma* of its age.

'Key Passages', the last section, comprising roughly a third of the text, propounds all of *Emma* through directed plot summaries and single-page fragments, practically chapter by chapter. Although this presentation advances a critical

understanding via sensitive close readings, frequently citing the scholarly extracts, overall it is dismaying, for I fear that it might encourage harried, overextended students to forego the delicious experience of reading *Emma* for what this fifty-page digest offers. It is an illuminating reading, but, forgive me, it purports to replace the novel. The bibliographical list is exceedingly short, though what this book offers in general in the way of additional readings might be gleaned by reference to all the works excerpted in the section on criticism. Those works, however, are not listed here, and the resulting bibliography seems incomplete. In general, *Jane Austen's Emma: A Sourcebook* offers a catalog of resources, which would lead the discriminating reader to the novel in toto, preferably Broadview, and to the critical articles which are lucidly introduced.

Last is *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation*, by Bharat Tandon, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Especially after having considered all the scholarship surveyed by the previous books, one might think that an Austen critic would be hard-pressed to offer any new insight, but such a person would be brought up short by this penetrating interpretation. The premise here, unlike the large economic, political, and social foci of the other two, is interpersonal, on manners and discourtesy, conversation and silences, morality and transgression. Tandon writes:

While Austen's works may be comparatively sparse in terms of story, they more than make up for this in the comic unpredictability and the analytical rigour of their narratives: characters wonder what others, and often they themselves, might be up to, and Austen finds a corollary for these situations, by activating her readers' capacities to piece matters out, and to get things wrong; to imagine how conversations sound, and to realize, thanks to the silent inscrutability of her texts, that they may mean something else altogether. Her narrative can provide the reassurances of shape and design, and the prickings of risk and contingency; the novels are thus not only the records of fictional conversations, but points at which new conversations begin. As she wrote to her sister Cassandra about *Pride and Prejudice*, 'I do not write for such dull Elves as have not a great deal of Ingenuity themselves.' (36)

Perhaps the former two books serve to assist those ‘dull Elves’ who cannot decipher Jane Austen without assistance, whereas this book offers a more sophisticated reader provocative reconsiderations for grappling with how Austen’s characters make their ways in their worlds, within the context of a capacious appreciation of what Austen might have learned from Burke, Addison and Steele, Swift, Shaftesbury, Tooke, and others. What the author sets forth is, as the preceding quotation suggests, that the individual and the community are revealed in dialogue. Tandon proceeds by looking at narrative structure in some of the juvenilia and later how that is developed in the novels. The remainder of the book, the bulk of its argument, explores ‘flirtation, social ventriloquism and characters’ movement in space’ (74).

Flirtation, beginning with Austen’s own misalliance with Tom Lefroy, of course, figures largely in novels based on courtship and the marriage plot. This orientation enables Tandon to look at how men and women deploy language and the many layers of irony under-girding it, as well as the indirect style of which the author is so great a master. Tandon observes: ‘On the one hand, there is the perennial question of how one balances a serious feeling for community with the rewards of a lively and sarcastic critical intelligence; and on the other, there is her insight into manners at work, the minute portrayal of the ease with which they can slide into mannerism’ (90).

The chapter on ‘Throwing the Voice’ offers a stimulating perspective on *Emma*, which makes it pertinent to this review. Tandon notes that Emma may well be made anxious by Miss Bates whose ‘domestic glossolalia’ (126) may anticipate her own doom as a single woman, and Tandon positions *Clarissa* as an important antecedent for Austen’s development of voice, character, and power for the epistolary *Lady Susan* and what succeeds it in the Austen canon, in free indirect style and particularly in *Emma*. Ventriloquism becomes a very perceptive approach to *Emma*, for the titular heroine’s ‘adventures in social and amatory ventriloquism, together with their attendant slip-ups, are the novel’s motive force’ (146). That is, Emma attempts to manipulate the words and actions of others, to dictate her very world, in fact, by means of what she says, and Tandon finds much resonance in the three short words that close an exchange between her and Mrs. Elton, ‘Emma was silenced’ (147). What

follows enacts punishment and repentance and acceptance. It is a masterful argument, as Tandon eloquently develops it.

The third section, ‘Habit and Habitation’, plays ideas of the picturesque and landscape, gesture and movement against what happens, particularly in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. In the former, area and boundaries, location and placement of people, places and things are organized and managed by a skilful author to conclude with a return home that is both expressed and implicit. In one of the most provocative sentences in his book, Tandon writes of *Persuasion*, ‘[i]f it is a book about rebirth, however, it is, like *Mansfield Park*, a novel about furniture’ (226). In some ways, to unpack that remark is worth the price of admission! Motion here becomes telling as characters arrange themselves and others, traveling, falling, relocating, returning. *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation* is, finally, a magnificent contribution to Austen studies. I envy everyone who has yet to read and profit from it.

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Caroline Franklin: *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Literary Life*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Pp. 256. £50. ISBN 0333972511.

Jacqueline Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry and the Culture of Gender* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003. Pp. 180. £40. ISBN 0719060044.

Anjana Sharma, *The Autobiography of Desire: English Jacobin Women Novelists of the 1790s*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 2004. Pp. 268. US\$17. ISBN 1403909474.

It is probably significant that all three of these books worry at the connection between women’s writing and women’s lives. Caroline Franklin’s *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Literary Life* is a contribution to Palgrave Macmillan’s ‘Literary Lives’ series. The ambition of the series is to re-direct literary biography by focusing not on the private lives of writers but on their professional careers. It is an ambition that Franklin takes more seriously than some other contributors. This is a book in which Wollstonecraft’s emotional life that has been central to most earlier biographies – the passionate

attachments to Fanny Blood, Fuseli, and Gilbert Imlay, the suicide attempts, and so on – are firmly subordinated to Wollstonecraft’s energetic and remarkably successful attempt to fashion herself into what she proudly denominated ‘the first of a new genus’, the professional woman writer.

To this end the biography takes the form of a series of linked essays, in which Franklin explores the forces at work in English society in the closing decades of the eighteenth century that made Wollstonecraft’s achievement possible. The account of Wollstonecraft’s childhood is informed by the new sense that she shared with contemporaries such as Godwin and Wordsworth that childhood experience was so powerful a determinant of adult character that the child might properly be termed the father of the man. When she sets up a school and takes an appointment as a governess her decisions are understood as a Whiggish affirmation of the importance of education that took its lead from John Locke, and that was especially strong in the Dissenting circles in which she moved. *Original Stories from Real Life* are identified as her contribution to a new literary field, children’s literature, in which Dissenters were particularly prominent. Franklin is alert to how a burgeoning print culture offered particularly welcome opportunities to a group excluded by Test Acts from the exercise of civic power. The Unitarians who formed the intellectual elite of English Dissent were particularly important in nurturing Wollstonecraft’s talent. Richard Price was an early mentor, and the formidable Joseph Johnson, the publisher and proprietor of the *Analytical Review*, was her most fruitful source of employment throughout her professional career. Franklin is admirable not just in the attention she pays to Wollstonecraft’s journalism but in placing it so firmly within the development in the last two decades of the eighteenth century of a new kind of periodical literature. She offers an excellent introduction to the Pamphlet War. She illuminates the *Vindication* by understanding it as a contribution to the popular genre of advice literature, and the *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* by placing it so firmly in the context of Wollstonecraft’s Girondist political sympathies.

But for all her concentration on Wollstonecraft’s cultural milieu, Franklin remains attentive to the literary qualities of her work. She is, for example, particularly

alert to the status of *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* as a generic experiment, and to *Maria, or the Wrong of Woman* as an anti-novel in which the institution of marriage to which the conventional novel looks to guarantee the happiness of its heroine is bleakly figured in the ruinous ‘mansion of despair’ in which Maria finds not a refuge but a prison. This is, I am confident, the best introduction to Wollstonecraft’s work currently available.

Wollstonecraft is also the key figure in Anjana Sharma’s *The Autobiography of Desire*, presiding over its first and last chapters. This is a puzzlingly organised book – its subtitle, ‘English Jacobin Women Novelists of the 1790s,’ would not lead one to expect that two of the seven chapters would be devoted to Holcroft, Bage and Godwin – and it has been very carelessly proof-read. But readers should not be deterred: this is a book that raises an issue that is at once important and difficult. Sharma begins, as is to be expected, by rejecting the decision that Gary Kelly took in 1976 to eliminate all women writers except for Inchbald from his pioneering study of the Jacobin novel on the ground that their novels lacked the ‘unity of design’ evident in the work of their male counterparts. And yet all four of the novels that provide the focus of her study, Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story*, Mary Hays’s *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, Charlotte Smith’s *The Young Philosopher*, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *The Wrongs of Woman*, are, as Sharma is aware, vulnerable to such a charge. She notes, for example, the ‘Romantic self-absorption’ that can make Hays’s Emma Courtney seem ‘narcissistic and self indulgent’, and in a pitilessly brilliant phrase she points to the ‘overwhelming inertia’ of Wollstonecraft’s novel, ‘its killing enervation of spirit and its incapacity to posit any change.’ Inchbald and Smith are better defended against such descriptions because both preserve a measure of ironic distance from their heroines, but Sharma is not at all certain that this is indisputably a merit.

For her, the defining difference between the male and the female Jacobin novel is that the men write ‘novels of purpose’, novels which address social problems and often contrive, by furnishing the novel with a happy ending, to indicate that these problems are susceptible to a solution. The women, on the other hand, ‘turned to their own lives’ to find the plots of their novels, espousing a ‘confessional mode’ that brought two unfortunate consequences. First, it served to underwrite the claims of

hostile critics who refused to distinguish between the novelists and their heroines, so that Emma Courtney's belief that it is the 'individuality of an affection' that 'constitutes its chastity' might be unproblematically transferred to Mary Hays. Second, it meant that they were unable to furnish their novels with conclusions in which the problems that the novels had explored were resolved. *The Wrongs of Woman*, which ends with an anxious list of unexplored possibilities is in this an exemplary novel, not a novel left unfinished only because of Wollstonecraft's premature death.

Sharma accepts that a novel such as *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* has an 'autobiographical impulse' which brings her outspoken hostility to the habit instituted by the first readers of these novels of understanding them as inadequately veiled autobiographies perilously close to self-contradiction. But there is a crucial distinction. Her novelists share an ideal, the ideal movingly defined by Wollstonecraft in a letter to Gilbert Imlay as 'a unison of affection with desire.' It was an ideal that led them to reject 'the traditional plots of love, courtship and marriage' which no longer provided 'adequate descriptors of interior life as these women experienced it.' But along with the traditional plots they rejected the happy endings that those plots ensured, because, by daring to imagine heroines who were at once reasonable and passionate, at once intelligent and sexual, they produced heroines for whom in England in the 1790s there was no available social space. For Sharma the central plot of *The Wrongs of Woman* is the heroine's discovery that to dream of escaping from the prison in which she has been immured by a tyrannical husband to a paradise which she will share with her soulmate is to dream of escaping from one Bastille only to find oneself enclosed in another. The novels of the English Jacobin women novelists are dedicated to the demonstration of an unhappy truth that their own lives had forcibly brought home to the women who wrote them, that it was quite impossible even 'to envision the union of sexuality and happiness.' It is a bleak conclusion to a passionate book.

Such a notion, it might be thought, is less the conclusion at which Charlotte Smith's poems arrive, than the premise from which they are written, producing an

effect that has prompted even a critic such as Harriet Guest to dismiss her sonnets as so much ‘feminine warbling and weeping’. But, as Jacqueline Labbe shows in her study of Charlotte Smith’s poetry, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, poetry and the culture of gender*, such a description simply rehearses the responses of contemporary reviewers who read her poems as the unmediated expression of Smith’s personal miseries. As a reviewer in the *European Magazine* put it in a review of *The Emigrants*, the poet is visible ‘almost at the bottom of every page, as [is] the portrait of some of the most renowned painters in the corner of their most favourite pictures.’ But Labbe, unlike the reviewer, has a sharp awareness of the oddity that a poet who seems so brazenly to advertise her own femininity should adopt techniques that prompt comparison with the stratagems of male painters so intent on asserting their status as artists that they refuse to leave themselves out of their own pictures.

Labbe, taking her cue from Judith Butler’s notion that gender is inherently theatrical, that it is performed, reads Smith’s poems as so many stages on which Smith performs the roles for which there was a predictable public demand; the wronged wife and the devoted mother. The first three chapters focus on *Elegiac Sonnets* and trace how in successive editions the volume goes about its primary business, the creation of ‘Charlotte Smith’, a process in which prefaces, frontispiece, plates and notes are as active as the poems themselves. Labbe can seem tart. ‘Is it wholly “feminine”,’ she asks of a Smith preface ‘to tell the world about an inadequate husband?’ She describes a poet who is acutely aware of ‘the marketability of motherhood’, whose whole volume is designed to offer its readers, in Labbe’s punning phrase, ‘a composed maternity’. But because Smith’s femininity is so self-consciously ‘composed’, the more closely Labbe examines ‘Charlotte Smith’, the speaker of the poems, ‘the more like a pantomime dame the “I” comes to seem: exactly like a figure in drag, “passing” as feminine.’

Labbe is most fascinated, and most fascinating, when gender polarities begin to collapse, as in one of the sonnets that Smith translated from *Werther*, in which Goethe’s ‘Lotte’ becomes in strident capitals, ‘CHARLOTTE’, as if Smith can function at once as male poet and his female muse, or in the plate illustrating the

sonnet, 'On being cautioned against walking on a headland', in which the male lunatic stands perilously on the cliff edge while behind him a female figure resembling Smith as she appears in the frontispiece observes him. The two figures are separated by sex, by clothing (he is dressed like stage madman, whereas her dress is demure), and by mental state, and yet, as Labbe notes, they share a single gesture, arms folded across their breasts. Similarly, Labbe understands *The Emigrants* as Smith's 'half and half' poem, a poem in which she occupies alternately the elevated position associated with the male poet and the embowered position conventionally preferred by the female. But Labbe remains unconvinced that Smith succeeds in fusing rather than confusing the personal and the political in that poem. For her, Smith's masterpiece is *Beachy Head*, in which a medley of different voices, male, female, and ungendered 'work to call into question the viability of an authoritative, disengaged "I".'

This is a compelling exploration of Smith's poetry, but it has still wider ambitions. For Labbe, Charlotte Smith is one of the two primary architects of the notion that poetry is 'a vehicle by which identity could be explored, established, and ultimately reconstructed', that is, she is one of the two primary architects of the literary movement that we know as Romanticism. The other, of course, is Wordsworth. It is a bold claim, but it is a claim that, if it is granted, would certainly require, as Labbe mildly puts it, 'a rethinking of our approach to Romantic gender.'

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