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**Nicholas Roe (ed), *Keats and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xviii + 320. Hb. £37.50 (\$59.95).** In his informative introduction to *Keats and History*, Nicholas Roe both gathers the various strands of Keats's political-historical interests and reviews what has been written about them -- a subject now recognized to be of major importance, despite the view of some past critics that it did not exist. The purpose of the essays in this collection, diverse in many respects, is, as Roe puts it, to show how 'the literary texture of Keats's poetry...emerged from and...acknowledged the manifold pressures of contemporary history' (p. 8). Roe's own contribution, 'Keats's Commonwealth', is an excellent case in point, demonstrating a political context for 'To Autumn' in the aftermath of the Peterloo massacre. This is accomplished not by reductively regarding the poem as an allegorization of political events, but with due attention to, as Roe puts it, 'the intricate verbal processes by which history is acknowledged and addressed through the varied mediations of art and beauty' (p. 209). The same may be said of most of the other essays in this volume. Susan Wolfson, for example, argues persuasively that Shelley's mythologizing of Keats's death in *Adonais* combined, ironically enough, with the caricaturing of antagonistic reviewers to produce a Keats that never was on sea or land -- passive, unmasculine, ahistorical. ('For', as Blake could have said, 'this history has been adopted by both parties'.) Wolfson goes on to show how in the Victorian period this image was transferred from the mourned to the mourner, leaving room for new views of Keats's accomplishment though with debilitating results for the understanding of Shelley's. Beginning with a similar perception about the myth of Keats's death, Martin Aske's 'Keats, the Critics, and the Politics of Envy' moves into Keats's own work, perceptively demonstrating how Keats's delineation of the psychodynamics of envy (often figured as the power of the eye) anticipates Nietzsche's presentation of resentment in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. One of the poems discussed by Aske in this regard, *Isabella*, is the subject of Kelvin Everest's 'Isabella in the Market-Place: Keats and Feminism'. Everest argues interestingly that epistemological oppositions parallel stylistic oppositions in that poem and that both are more ironizing than is usually recognized. The 'feminist perspective' for Everest leads to a judgment that the love of *Isabella* and *Lorenzo* 'is falsified, disguised from themselves, by codes of social behaviour which have been shaped to the purposes of those social interests [i.e., the brothers'] to which they appear to be opposed' (p. 240). Yet, while it's true that the lovers are imprisoned within the conventions of their narrative, to ask them to step outside those conventions (or to blame them for not doing so) is, in effect, to ask them to step outside narrative itself -- something which by definition they cannot. Such a view, even when put by a critic as sensitive to the poem's concerns as Everest, literalizes its subject rather

than historicizing it. In a book devoted to Keats and history, it is no surprise that the Hyperion poems bulk large. Michael O'Neill points up a certain ambiguity about history in the first Hyperion, 'a poem that withdraws from the contemporary but is responsive to Napoleon's dubious bequest, his legacy of paralysed aftermath' (p. 153). Does such ambiguity impede or enrich the poem? Hyperion advances a progressive view of history, yet the reader is made to sympathize with the fallen Titans, which leads to a secondary myth 'of the artist preoccupied and vexed into utterance by the lack of a clearcut view' (p. 158). That is of course the moment with which *The Fall of Hyperion* begins. Vincent Newey in 'Keats, History, and the Poets' also takes up some of the contrary elements in the Hyperion poems. The abandonment of the first is explained as resulting from 'a clash between the secular optimism of evolutionary theory and a stubborn religious insistence on unavoidable human ideals' (p. 82). This contradiction becomes the starting point for *The Fall*, in which the very opposition between progressive and tragic modes of perception becomes thematized. As Terence Allan Hoagwood finely argues in his 'Keats, Fictionality, and Finance', historical change is a subject in *The Fall of Hyperion* -- 'not a specific example of change (e. g., the French Revolution; the rise and fall of Napoleon), and not merely the concept of change, but rather the process of change itself' (p. 137). Opposition, contrariety, antithesis -- these are terms that with good reason recur in discussions of the Hyperion poems. In 'Keats and the Prison-House of History', Nicola Trott, like Hoagwood, sees such elements as part of a maturing vision. 'Hyperion reflects the suffocated, accidental soul of Keats, Apollo his (trans)figurative ego' (p. 269). In contrast to Hazlitt, who could state 'All things move not in progress, but in a ceaseless round', Keats has commitments to both progressive and cyclical views of history, and these are related to other contrasts -- paralysis and movement, the serpent and the chameleon. A further dimension of antithetical vision is provided by Greg Kucich's stimulating 'Keats's Literary Tradition and the Politics of Historiographical Invention', in which Keats's indebtedness to modern historians, especially William Robertson, is explored. Once more the emphasis is on the seemingly contradictory elements in Keats's construction of history, described as Keats's 'scenario of simultaneous linear progress and degeneration' (p. 252). What emerges from these various views is how strenuously Keats in the Hyperions sought an historical view that would accommodate the contrarities of both individual and collective human experience. Although Keats's longer poems are especially important to Keats and History, this does not mean that the great odes are ignored. On a Grecian Urn is the major text of Theresa M. Kelley's 'Keats, Ekphrasis, and History'. The speaker of the poem is, in Kelley's post-modern view, not authoritative but at times genuinely confused, posing questions that are not merely rhetorical. In this reading the quotation marks printed for the first time in 1820 indicate that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' means that 'this is the urn's truth, not his and, presumably, not ours' (p. 230). Such an interpretation depends, as the author notes, on taking 'Ye' as a singular, a point that would be stronger if some examples of such usage on Keats's part were produced in their contexts instead of a general statement that 'until the late nineteenth century it could also be singular'. 'History, Self and Gender in Ode to Psyche' by Daniel P. Watkins appears, at least until the faint praise of its conclusion, to put the value of the poem itself into question. While admitting that 'in *Psyche* there are no overt

references to the market-place that might clearly demonstrate its position within a culture of commodity exchange', the author argues that 'the poem's vision of transcendental possibility is grounded in a specifically bourgeois sensibility that is of a piece with the capitalist economic order of commodity exchange' (p. 92). In this view the critic knows everything about the poem, the poet nothing: '...The poem's expression is full of goodness, while its political unconscious carries within it the very contradictions, inconsistencies, and injustices that the poet believes have been overcome' (p. 98). So much for Johnny Keats! Perhaps the best comment on this comes from the beginning of Michael O'Neill's essay (p. 143): 'Pity Keats, pilloried by snobbish reviewers in his own life, now patronised by politically correct critics who think that systems of social relations hold a poet's pen, inscribing sombre, predictable secrets into texts'. Two essays stand somewhat apart from the concerns of the others in *Keats and History* but are no less valuable for that. John Barnard's valuable 'Charles Cowden Clarke's 'Cockney' Commonplace Book' reprints and annotates selections from the notebook of Keats's friend with a view to showing the importance of shared values concerning politics, history, and poetry. Closing the volume, John Kerrigan's 'Writing Numbers: Keats, Hopkins the History of Chance' is both informative and (a rarer quality in scholarship) delightful. Numbers both arithmetical and poetic are the subject, and Keats's preoccupation with numbers, games of chance, and the role of 'Chance' in human life is so ably demonstrated that the reader wonders why it hasn't been obvious all along. Hopkins, whose interest is described as 'less ludic' than Keats's, is shown to have had other motives: Hopkins was drawn to mathematical order in ways which provided an antidote to theories of atomistic 'chance' and fateful statistics' (p. 298). *Keats and History* begins with a statement by Richard Woodhouse that 'There is a great degree of reality in all that Keats writes; and there must be many allusions to particular Circumstances, in his poems: which would add to their beauty & Interest, if properly understood'. By placing Keats's works in relation to the history of his time and place, and by delineating the historical concerns within the works themselves, this book richly contributes to our sense of his reality.

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**Fred Botting, Gothic. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 152. Hb £25, pb £6.99. David B. Allison, Mark S. Roberts and Allen S. Weiss (eds), Sade and the Narrative of Transgression. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. 270. Hb £35.** The strengths and weaknesses of Botting's book *Gothic* derive from its existence as a teaching book, rather than a work of thoroughly new intellectual scholarship. As part of Routledge's 'Critical Idiom' series, this volume will undoubtedly succeed in its aims to provide coherent, interesting and accessible reading matter for the undergraduate student market. Overall, *Gothic* combines a rather traditional (indeed disappointingly canonical) historical overview of primary material, with a far more dynamic, contemporary reading of the term as it is used within twentieth-century film, punk and literary/cultural contexts. Undoubtedly this is a common-sense decision underlying what is basically a common-sense book, for in the process Botting succeeds in making the text marketable to traditional courses on Romanticism and the Eighteenth century as well as to those directed at more recent developments in cultural studies and popular fiction.

However, although there are definite aspects of the historical sections which are to be applauded for their clarity (in particular the author's reading of the sublime, which is as useful and illuminating an introduction as I have read), in purely academic terms it is the contemporary period that is the book's major strength. The central conceptual motif of this book lies with the image of the labyrinth and its changing cultural application since the eighteenth century. Commencing as a symbol of Enlightenment order and unity, Botting stresses the changing connotations of the labyrinth once re-evaluated in gothic terms. Again, one of the interesting aspects of this reading is the way in which Botting extends the term's application out from a central fictional nexus to interconnect on a symbolic level with a variety of cultural and historical preoccupations. The only point at which his usage of the image fails is, ironically, on its initial appearance, when he claims that 'One of the principal horrors lurking throughout Gothic fiction is the sense that there is no exit from the darkly illuminating labyrinth of language' (p.14). The point is intriguing, theoretically intricate, and well worth pursuing, but there is no space to do so here. In apparent acknowledgement of this unavoidable limitation, Botting leaves the point (and the reader) hanging quizzically in mid-air. In twentieth-century terms, two key connections made point towards the existence of a dual relationship between the gothic and postmodernism and the gothic and science fiction (sf). Here Botting successfully synthesises what could have become a laboured and over-elaborate argument into one which is convincing and clear in its application. It is at this point that another conceptual strength comes to the fore in his attention to the central role played by temporal dislocation. Instead of conventional gothic nostalgia, he claims, sf provides the same 'sequences of pursuit through underground tunnels' (p.166), but does so in a manner that projects temporality ever outwards into a 'dark, unknown space from which horrors are visited' (p.163). As far as postmodernism is concerned, where the conventional gothic implies the existence of an established 'real' underlying the cloaking mask of unspecified fear, Botting reminds us that postmodernism reveals the horror of the real, itself, becoming a fictive illusion. I began by implying certain qualms accompanying my awareness that this book is both important and useful for student readers. The first derives purely from the fact that the more sophisticated theoretical insights one associates with Botting's work cannot, of necessity, be accommodated here. The second is more significant, in that it tackles 'Gothic' on its own terms. In essence, aside from the twentieth century section, one cannot avoid the fact that much of the historical territory of this book shadows (at least in its adopted structure and choice of primary texts). David Punter's key study *The Literature of Terror*. Bearing in mind that Punter's book was first published in 1980, it may well have been Botting's implicit aim to provide an updated volume to supercede its ancestor. However, now that *The Literature of Terror* has, itself, been updated and re-published. competition between these works seems somewhat inevitable. *Sade and the Narratives of Transgression* is an important and authoritative collection of literary and philosophical essays. Most already exist in print elsewhere, although a few (including two of the strongest pieces in the volume, those by Phillipe Roger and Alphonso Lingis) seemingly appear here for the first time. The figurehead of the collection is Bataille's essay 'The Use Value of D.A.F. Sade', which sets the tone for the high calibre of the work found throughout. Among this array of powerful and

rigorous intellectual voices one finds Pierre Klossowski, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jane Gallop and others. Structurally, although the initial sequencing of essays works well (predominantly due to the specifically intertextual connections between them), the middle section rather loses its way. The sequencing at this stage appears arbitrary and natural connections between pieces become obscured as a result. Roger's essay suffers most from this organizational flaw, mainly because it comes too late in the order to have maximum impact. The clarity of vision and argument that he offers would have made it an excellent scholarly introduction to the volume as a whole (replacing the rather weak contribution made here by the editors). The final chapters are better organised and culminate in a playfully performative essay by Chantal Thomas. In 'Fantasizing Juliette', Thomas reconceives Sade's silenced and objectified 'heroine' as a fully affirmative speaking narrative subject. But this piece is not alone in utilising a creative voice. It is the skilful combination of intellectual rigour and out-and-out play that renders Alphonso Lingis's 'The Society of the Friends of Crime' the tour de force of the entire collection. The volume is worth reading for this essay alone. Despite the (at times) unhelpful sequencing of essays, thematic clusters do interweave between individual chapters. Links between reproduction, perversion and societal/kinship relations succeed in transforming Klossowski's piece on the philosopher-villain, Gallop's on Sade and the maternal, and Nancy K. Miller's on Juliette and the family unit as master-slave relations into an intriguing and sustained triadic debate. Additional comparative connections can be made on the basis of the narrative orientation of Lawrence Schehr's work on 'Sade's Literary Space' and Marcel Henaff's 'The Encyclopedia of Excess'. An interesting balance is struck, throughout the volume, between situating Sade as an eighteenth century figure and rereading his work through late twentieth-century continental philosophy. Henaff's piece is perhaps most impressive in its ability to successfully combine the two. His words here typify some of the more interesting conceptual connections that as a whole:

The surface of the Book, the Earth, the Body, are thus skins - replete with folds and sites which must be traversed, inventoried, saturated, modified. Discourse, Voyage, and Pleasure all trace out the same gesture in different registers...The stake is all or nothing in Sade's formula: 'If you don't know everything you know nothing at all'. (p. 150)

Overall, two diverging routes emerge from the collective debate. Both centred upon the body, the first moves away to explore the relationship between the libidinal economy and structures of capital (including capital punishment). The second, rooted far more explicitly in the discourse of the flesh, considers 'over-spending' in terms of desire, excess and abject forms. It is this final facet of the text that points towards what was, for me, the only noticeable omission in this volume; namely any mention of the work of Julia Kristeva (despite the inclusion of several references to the *Tel Quel* group). But, inevitably, every reader who comes to this text will be looking for something different. Its greatest strength is that I strongly suspect most readers will find it. Lucie Armitt University of Wales, Bangor.

Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. 298 + xii.

£35.00 Shelley's writings on diet have long been something of an embarrassment for politically oriented critics. Few can forget Shelley's famous claim, in *Queen Mab*, that nature and society will undergo a radical transformation when human beings finally relinquish eating meat and return to their original vegetable diet. In *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, Timothy Morton makes this claim the centrepiece for a valuable discussion of the central that dietary language plays in Shelley's understanding of nature, society, and the body. In this expansive, and well-researched study, he reconstructs early nineteenth-century ideas about the 'politics of eating' the interrelationship between food and a healthy social and material body, in order to reassert the relevance of Shelley's ideas, especially for current ecologically-based criticism. Morton's is a distinctively new study of the poet, one that substantially contributes to our understanding of the historical contexts shaping his practice and promulgation of vegetarianism. Since vegetarianism as a philosophical movement largely emerged during the latter part of the eighteenth century, Morton has no difficulty in demonstrating that Shelley's dietary concerns are not marginal to the period, but are responsive to a wide range of writings. During the 1790s, arguments for 'natural rights' were soon extended to animals. Despite Thomas Taylor's mockery in *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792), these ideas played a central role in the emergence of nineteenth-century animal rights activism. Equally importantly, there existed an extensive archive of medical literature, from Cheyne and Rousseau to William Lambe and Joseph Ritson, which frequently suggested that a 'vegetable diet' was a key to good health. In such texts, meat is almost equivalent to disease. Morton usefully notes these sources and also provides a valuable discussion of the manner in which, in the nineteenth-century biographies of the poet, Shelley's vegetarianism should be read as a radical political gesture, as a language for understanding and presenting an alternative to a society based on consumption, class inequalities, and the domination of nature. Drawing on Keith Thomas's *Man and the Natural World*, yet recasting these concerns in the language of Deleuze and Guattari, Morton is concerned with the body as a socio-historical phenomenon. Since the body occupies the space where society and the natural world meet, Morton argues that it is through the body, and Shelley's attempt to refashion it, that we can best approach his ideas about nature and social change in general. Throughout the book, in engaging analyses of a large number of the poet's works, Morton makes a very strong case for understanding Shelley as an ecological writer, as a 'social ecologist', someone who believes that 'renewal of the earth' will take place 'at the hands of a just society' (221). Such a viewpoint, which makes ecology subservient to social concerns is very much in keeping with Shelley's own priorities. For Morton, Shelley is a 'technohumanist', someone who believes that 'industry plus culture equals pleasurable progress' (206). Yet *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste* would be an even more powerful book if it were, perhaps, more critical of Shelley's faith in the social and technological remaking of the earth. Despite the difficulties that inhere in the 'preservationist' model of ecology articulated by Wordsworth (and in Romantic studies recently by Jonathan Bate), there is certainly a dark side to Shelley's idea of ecology as 'Utopian exploitation' (233). Fifty years after Shelley's death, the 'greening of the desert,' which is central image in his work, reappeared in a project supported by de Lesseps shortly after the building of

the Suez Canal. As a display of French imperial know-how, it was proposed that the Sahara Desert be flooded. As Shelley's participation in the Tremadoc Embankment project suggests, good politics did not necessarily translate into good ecology: despite his radical political position, supportive of the working class, Shelley's was just as supportive of the idea of this large engineering project as his employer, William Alexander Maddocks. Despite my reservations about the extent to which nature, as a material reality plays a significant role in Shelley's conception of society and social reform, Morton's book remains a thought provoking and challenging work of criticism.

**Alan Bewell University of Toronto**

**Angela Esterhammer, *Creating States: Studies in the Performative Language of John Milton and William Blake*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. Pp.245. Hb £29.** Angela Esterhammer's engaging study of John Milton and William Blake represents a sustained attempt to define their 'visionary' poetics in terms of a methodology derived from the 'speech-act' theories of, amongst others, J.L. Austin, John Searle and Emile Benveniste. She makes a convincing case for the relevance of such theories, arguing that 'Vision as event and entity corresponds exactly to the notion of a speech act, which is both speech, or the process of uttering words, and an act, or the thing which the words accomplish'. Tracing her line of argument back to the book of Genesis, Esterhammer identifies two related but discrete forms of performative language. On the one hand she posits a 'phenomenological performative' through which a speaker's utterance is creative by virtue of his or her own intrinsic worth or ability. (The prime example of this would be the performative creativity of God during the act/utterance of the Creation: 'Let there be light'). On the other hand she locates what she terms the 'socio-political performative' whereby a speech-act's effectiveness is dependent upon an institutionally sanctioned authority. (The most obvious example of this type of performative language being that of the priest who declares, 'I pronounce you man and wife'). The force of Esterhammer's analysis derives from her sensitive awareness of the ways in which these two types of speech-act are often interrelated in the visionary poetry of both Milton and Blake. Both poets possess a radical distrust of institutional authority and yet both are implicitly aware that their visionary self-promotion as inspired prophets is in danger of replicating the tyrannical imposition that their work ostensibly opposes. This is, of course, not a new observation, particularly as it applies to Blake, but the clearly focused linguistic methodology brought to it by Esterhammer enables us to find new ways of discussing old problems and it has the additional virtue of alerting us in specific ways to the 'minute particulars' of the poetry itself. This book offers a wealth of sharply detailed analysis of textual detail, ranging from a suggestive discussion of the language of origins and originality in the opening of *Paradise Lost* to a revealing demonstration of the 'ambiguity of "as" in Blake's epic poetry. My only criticism of this book (and it is perhaps not really a criticism) is that it sometimes seems to fail to develop fully the insights it offers. In part, of course, this is due to lack of space but, given that Esterhammer writes of the 'Romantic poets' in general as being caught between the two forms of performative language that she identifies, I would very much like to know how she would apply her ideas to the work of Blake's contemporaries. Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, for example, which is

crucially concerned with the two speech-acts of cursing and creating, would make a very interesting companion piece to Blake's Jerusalem as it is presented here. Opening up Blake's texts to the work of his contemporaries would also go some way towards answering my other misgiving. Whilst Esterhammer interestingly designates one form of speech act as 'socio-political', there is little sense of the material conditions which define the moment of a text's production and reception. She writes at one point of Blake 'losing whatever interpretive community he was ever able to address' but doesn't quite follow through the political implications of a 'performative' language which is deprived of an audience. A more fully integrated account of the textual strategies of other contemporaneous writings (which is tantalizingly suggested by some brief concluding remarks concerning Derrida's reading of the American Declaration of Independence and Lyotard's analysis of the French Declaration of 1789) would begin to resituate Blake within his own 'socio-political' context. Despite these slight reservations, this is a very good book which has a lot to teach us about Blake's distinctive language usage. It deserves a wide readership.

**Philip Cox Sheffield Hallam University**

**Stephen Copley and Kathryn Sutherland (eds), Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations: New interdisciplinary essays, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. pp. 205. Pb. £12.99** This stimulating collection of essays has the more-or-less clearly stated aim of challenging the monopoly the free market right has sought to establish in the cultural ownership of Adam Smith's ideas over the past two decades. One can only applaud the impulse to broaden the context in which the Wealth of Nations is read, for it is a seminal text in our culture, and it is always dangerous when such texts start being monopolised by narrowly doctrinaire interpretations. Not that the essays under review are entirely innocent of the desire to push Smith in a particular direction: but they are generally characterised by a rich interdisciplinarity, and a spirit of enquiry, which tends to open rather than close doors. On the whole they make good use of the strong scholarly work available on Smith (though the recent Ian Ross biography and the discussion it has provoked evidently came too late to be used here, which is a pity). They certainly do a good job of exposing the narrowness and distortion involved in making Smith purely the prophet of laissez-faire: Stephen Copley's Introduction is useful here, describing the ideological battleground clearly. Keith Tribe, moving with assurance between political economy and reception theory, shows some of the ways in which Smith's work was received and re-written (sometimes literally) in the nineteenth century, as cultural circumstances changed. Heinz Lubasz goes straight for the contemporary 'market' reading, energetically tackling its reductionism and anachronism, and rediscovering an eighteenth-century Smith, advocate of maximum employment --among other anathemas of the modern Smithians. Andrew Skinner trawls twentieth-century interpreters of Smith, notably Viner and Keynes, to support a more relativist approach. He considers the range of Smith's thought on the state's role and on education and finds it to be a long way from what the Adam Smith Institute might desire. Noel Parker's essay, drawing on materials from the Lectures on Jurisprudence and the Theory of Moral Sentiments as well as the Wealth of Nations, builds a model of the

Smithian view of progress and social value which is far from being deterministic or mechanistic. Ted Benton offers an intricately contextualized and developed discussion of Smith's ideas on economic value and exchange. These five essays which, with the Introduction, comprise most the book, make a formidable, concerted onslaught on narrow interpretations of the *Wealth of Nations*, ranging over three centuries, and over all the key issues. The two other essays in the book are less predictable but equally if not more richly suggestive. Kathryn Sutherland might seem at first to be on a fool's errand in writing on women and the *Wealth of Nations*, for as she swiftly establishes, there are very few references to women in the text. Yet there is, as she shows, a vital female tradition of interpreting and developing Smith's ideas, and there is also, as so often in women's history, a hidden presence in both the assumptions of Smith's book and the 'real world' with which it interacts. Sutherland makes these (and the few references to women that are in the text) the basis for an insightful and wide-ranging analysis of the gendering of economic and cultural discourse. Kurt Heinzelman is concerned with the rhetoric of the text, and uses genre to illuminate the topic. Georgic, in particular, existing on the borderline between the literature of pleasure and that of improvement, becomes the appropriate site of Smith's activity, and we are usefully reminded that Smith began his career as a teacher of rhetoric. Here the study of form yields vital information about content. These essays are clearly written, and show a very welcome willingness to quote from and analyse the text itself (a rarer activity than one would suppose) in developing new readings. In a perfect world I would like to have seen among them something on Smith and Scottish history, the one obvious gap. But even without this they will be a very useful resource for students and scholars, and in seminar discussions.

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**Willard Spiegelman, *Majestic Indolence: English Romantic Poetry and the Work of Art*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. 221. £30.** A scholarly work on indolence is bound to elicit a fair share of ben trovato quips: 'how was the book ever finished?' 'Doesn't this prove that the study of art is as useless as the object on which it depends?' 'Come on, own up, in the end, isn't it all a waste of time?' Spiegelman, with a nod to Pater and Wilde, would no doubt draw sustenance from such remarks; after all, as James put it: 'It is in the waste - the waste of time, of passion, of curiosity, of contact, that the true initiation resides'. But, like any act of professional loafing (a word that the critic makes much of in a concluding chapter on Whitman and American poetry) waste is something we must work at. The condition that Elizabeth Bishop referred to as 'a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration' is a reward known only to a precious few: James's initiates, Coleridge's friends, Wordsworth's disciples, Shelley's circle and Spiegelman's ideal reader. In view of the privilege it accords to the avatars of poetic freedom, *Majestic Indolence* offers itself as an unashamed defence of old-style aesthetic formalism. Its targets are predictable: Marxists and new historicists are condemned for being 'neopuritanical'; for converting the art of the pastoral into the craft of the georgic. Where Williams and McGann regard the freedom of art as a category of historical effect, Spiegelman argues for its centrality. To forward his argument he draws on the proleptically anti-Marxian thought of

Friedrich Schiller: '[M]an shall only play with beauty, and shall play only with Beauty ... Man only plays, when ... he is a man, and he is only entirely a man when he plays'. Otium, in Spiegelman's view, is a mode of play essential to the experience of literature; whether it is manifested in Wordsworth's 'wise passiveness', Keats's 'delicious, diligent indolence' or Wilde's 'cultivated leisure', the production of literature demands patience of 'a high, heroic order'. Thus, repeatedly, the poets in this volume are shown 'grappling', 'working' and 'struggling' with the ambiguous genealogy of indolence; between its genial sense as 'playing labour' and its older, negative sense, as sloth or torpor. (In passing it should be noted that Spiegelman is very good on the changing status of indolence as a trope in English literature. Cowper, surely a key player in this debate, is a surprising omission, however. ) In romanticism, states of oneiric suspension lead to a profitable encounter with sources of literary creativity. As a reminder of art's recreational purpose, over and above the political, Spiegelman draws attention to the contest between Wordsworth and Coleridge. Where, in 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', the poet benefits from his willingness to suspend judgment, not knowing at the time 'what wealth to me the show had brought', Coleridge, in 'Dejection', is poisoned by feelings that threaten to collapse his reserve of 'Joy'. There is, at the risk of sounding otiose, too much thought in Coleridge. Lacking the Wordsworthian ability to maintain the balance between the will to 'work' and the will 'to be wrought upon', the poetry is too conditional, too invested in its own state of being to be the occasion of a sustained enrichment. In many respects, the densely-argued chapter on Coleridge is a good indication of both the strengths and weaknesses of Spiegelman's approach. Having signalled his interest in the aesthetic formalism of the Kantian tradition ('a feeling for the beautiful ... "presupposes that the mind is in restful contemplation, and preserves it in that state") the 'freedom' of the aesthetic allows poetry to become a repository of feelings, values and ideas untainted by the accretions of time and the social. Through a series of intricate close-readings, the romantic poem emerges as a privileged site of human consciousness. But one wonders whether this traditional argument can withstand the qualifications of a post-Althusserian ideological critique. Later on, in a spirited reading of Keats, Spiegelman enters into a dialogue with Marjorie Levinson. Where Levinson sees Keats's interest in passivity, stable identity and 'quiet being' as an indication of the poet's desire to attain the influential authority of the bourgeoisie, Spiegelman maintains that Keats's anxieties concerning passiveness and leisure have a physiological as well as a political root. Unfortunately the notion that the body resists political co-optation is never fully explained. In Keats, the body, like the work of art, is majestically autotelic. I suspect that Spiegelman misconstrues Marxism on several points. For one he seems to identify political critique with an ill-informed return to the archive, as if texts were reducible to contexts. In fact, the inadequacy of this gesture has long been recognized, as Adorno argues in *Aesthetic Theory*: 'Works of art are ... unconsciously the historiography of their own epoch; history is not the least form of knowledge they mediate. This is precisely why they are incommensurable with historicism, which seeks to reduce them to a history external to them rather than to pursue their genuine historical content'. This is the point that the writer of *Majestic Indolence* seems unwilling or unable to grasp: historicity is ingrained in the very constitution of the work. To reduce the investigation of indolence to either internal or external

factors is to ignore the inextricability of social and political forces within the aesthetic production of ideas. For all its theoretical tendentiousness, however, the book offers a highly illuminating perspective on a dominant but neglected trope of romanticism. The chapter on 'Shelley's Versions of Pastoral', focussing on the poetry's verbs, is a model of scholarly rigour and sensitivity. Here the reading reaches beyond its conceptual limits to effect a brilliant commentary on the historicity of romantic language. In Shelley's hands indolence is revealed as the guiding principle of a radical political programme: subject and object, aristocrat and hoi poloi, male and female - each term blends with the other in a pastoral locus amoenus. In the end, Spiegelman, like Shelley, stresses the need for a poetry cleansed of the 'unprofitable strife' of the social: '[w]e acquire wisdom, virtue, and especially poetry through the ordeals of our indolence'. To further this argument I would emphasise the way in which indolence is figured as an ordeal. In many respects the transcendence Spiegelman values in romanticism is analogous to Marcuse's 'great refusal'. But to render indolence in such a way does not mean an evasion of history; it means investigating the generative force of an idea.

**Philip Shaw University of Leicester**

**Vincent Newey, Centring The Self: Subjectivity. Society and Reading from Thomas Gray to Thomas Hardy. Aldershot: Scolar Press 1995. pp. 273. Hb. £42.50** The 'essay' was once a literary form in its own right; so much so that scholars or critics could collect theirs into books with non-denoting, general or fanciful titles. Now, we produce articles, often elaborate ones with heavy annotation, and the justifying unity is thematic, even if found - genuinely enough on occasion - by a hindsight reading and imposition. In tenor and in fact, the essays Vincent Newey has collected here are learned-journal pieces. As such each delves into its chosen author from a local angle, and the book's unity lies in the tacit wider parameter of poets living in roughly the period 1750 to 1900 when, as Newey puts it, 'order and worth were (felt to be) located...not in external structures or verities but in personal life and resources'. A sharper profile then emerges in that this very self-centring remained 'linked to an alert sense of society' in the same process. So from the outset, Gray and Cowper attain subjectivity not by some internal self-examination, but gradually through a gentleness. In the opening stanzas of the Elegy the meditative mood is conjured from the external world as 'vivid slow-motion dream-impressions and sensations', and the flowers that ensuingly blush unseen are both waste and miracle. Cowper watched the social nuances perennially, but the very sensitivity by which he achieved this marks his work with an unmistakeable voice both vulnerable and gracious at once. Newey's treatment of Wordsworth is particularly unusual, for the comparison in the one paper on him is with Bunyan and the theme of election. Wordsworth's concern with identity and destiny is taken here as inseparable from his sense of calling as a poet - not only in the well-known moment at Cambridge but in its renewal in for instance 'Resolution and Independence'. This treatment shows how much Newey's essays - refreshingly - differ from each other rather than always striving to unite. For Wordsworth is the recurring presence throughout the book, yet the way Shelley and Byron seem both to echo and defy him (are anxious at his influence) is not treated by Newey in election's terms. Rather, Shelley's Alastor is a defiant, oppositional yet troubled re-write of

Wordsworth's *Wanderer*, while Byron's *Childe Harold*, equally journeying, evinces a mind always formed from outside emanations; Nature to be sure, but also the decadent Colosseum, the art of the Vatican, and whatever else leaves the self endlessly self-constructing from impressions, disturbances, scenes, occurrences. Finally, on Keats Newey turns away yet again, this time to the currently much-debated matter of Keats's interest (or not) in overt politics. Nobly to this reader Newey grants all he can while still, it seems to me, insisting on Keats's 'romance of politics rather than the thing itself'; his 'commitment to the idea of genius independent of worldly titles'. It is characteristic of the book as a whole, whose strength lies less in a single developed theme than in the dense texture of scholarly comment, mutual allusion, contemporary event, elucidation of single poems or their parts, and unexpected cross-reference or drawn implication. And the last chapter, on Hardy's *Jude The Obscure*, takes a new turn altogether, toward writing itself, ecriture, novel rather than poem paradoxically occasioning the most explicit focus on poesis. This collection of essays is best seen as a resource on the shelf, to be used when the reader's interest in any one poet would like - to mix metaphors - a shot in the arm from a previously unconsidered channel.

**John Powell Ward University of Wales, Swansea**

**John Williams, *William Wordsworth: A Literary Life*. Literary Lives Series. London: Macmillan, 1996. Pp. ix + 208. Hb £35.** The proposition of the series is that 'professional, publishing and social contexts' shape the work. John Williams shows how Wordsworth's personal ambition to live and celebrate a 'literary life' in the Revolutionary period conflicted with these contexts only to emerge in laureate triumph from their redefinition. From a coterie poet, alienated from public life, he became the guardian of universal, private values that, selectively deployed, later validated Britain's imperial mission. The recipe for professional recognition is roughly that of Jeffrey's admonitions: set the private life in a classical, or at least comprehensible, complementary relation to the public life, and relieve the muse of low company and language. What Wordsworth added to this prescription were the universalizing, aesthetic, subjective elements of an original poetry that 'could least be spared' in Hazlitt's rather grudging phrase. Williams celebrates Wordsworth's 'modernity' on similar grounds, yet more often it is the tensions between the public and the private, the universal and the particular, that are claimed as constituting his modernity, tensions which were released but never resolved. As a 'modern' poet circa 1790 the literary Wordsworth of middle-class sensibility languidly postures in morose alienation, then abruptly adopts the equally alienated role of revolutionary. In Germany (where else?) Wordsworth assumes familiar Romantic lineaments as the 'simplicity, nature and permanence' of the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* are interpreted as 'a glimpse of the infinite' (104), the transformation of life into text, and a commentary on public life 'uttered from within, rather than beyond, the boundaries of aesthetic experience' (121). Goslar was 'the crucible of Wordsworth's modernity' (103). Nevertheless the radicalism of his earlier self persistently shatters unity of vision, staging a confrontation between the private life with its 'democratic' pantheism and the public values of conservative Britain. Images of hunting or even of more lofty blooms than the celandine reawaken the ghosts of Jacobin sympathies and antipathies. The

pantheistic rather than orthodox conclusion of *The Excursion* antagonised readers like Jeffrey and put back Wordsworth's public rehabilitation until the 1820 volume. Here an evident Christian commitment and a re-ordering of poems redefine his poetic persona. Following Nicholas Roe in much of his political interpretation, Williams explores Wordsworth's possible exposure to oppositional thought in his family and at Hawkshead School and usefully questions the extent of his later conservatism. Wordsworth's 'radicalism', however, has personal but little political authenticity. He renounces radical political ideas, especially the 'evil' doctrines of Godwin, in favour of the values of domesticity and 'nature' exactly as *The Prelude* describes. His radicalism becomes a mode of feeling, an intuitive sense of human and natural interconnectedness which can yield radical or Burkean traditional insights, but it is also a less reassuring mode of memory. Williams's Wordsworth is dogged by a radicalism which is a ghostly return of the repressed dissident of 1793, haunted by social and sexual guilt. The 'Discharged Soldier' and 'Female Vagrant' are doubling figures of this guilty alienation, encountered in various guises throughout his work until the guilty Godwinian sailor of 'Salisbury Plain' finally welcomes expiation in 'Guilt and Sorrow' Within a framework of orthodox Romantic theory Williams manages to question its more homogenizing assumptions by a historical contextualisation derived from the most modern authorities. His accounts of the transitions in Wordsworth's career are often debatable, but the attempt to relate the poetic persona to the circumstances of composition profitably opens up such debates. The attempt reflects the mixture of scepticism, belief and half-persuaded ingenuity with which many scholars approach the autobiographical aspects of Wordsworth's poetry.

**Chris Jones University of Wales, Bangor**

**Gerda S. Norvig, *Dark figures in the Desired Country: Blake's Illustrations to The Pilgrim's Progress*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press. 1993. Pp. xxxii + 327. Hb. £45.**

Gerda S. Norvig's extensively illustrated *Dark Figures in the Desired Country* is the first full-length study of Blake's illustrations to John Bunyan, and is both an exhaustive account of the history of Blake's response to Bunyan and an extended reading of the twenty-eight watercolour drawings that Blake produced to *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1824, and which the volume reproduces in colour. Norvig's interest in these designs goes back, she tells us, to the 'mid-1970s' when the concerns of her study began to take shape. A lot has changed on the critical scene since then, of course, and Norvig's book rather engagingly and apologetically opens with an account of her own interpretive pilgrimage from reading Blake in the 1970s with 'missionary ... zeal' as a prophet of 'spiritual wholeness' to reading him in the 1990s as a figure of 'postmodern questioning'. The study attempts, indeed, to wear its postmodern credentials on its sleeve; the blurb trumpets that Norvig's discussion uncovers the 'strikingly postmodern' strategies of Blake's revisionary inscription of Bunyan's religious allegory. However, as Norvig herself explains, her view of Blake's aesthetic practice in these designs has remained 'virtually the same' from the 1970s to the present study; and there is, in fact, a critical recidivism about her approach that makes her, while gesturing towards a number of recent theoretical perspectives, pursue a very traditional and specifically 'archetypal' approach to

Blakean production in general and the designs to Bunyan in particular. Her study - whose own slow progress has, like Christian's in the Progress, been subjected to many changes and vicissitudes - is in this way uneasily poised between a contemporary critical scene whose agenda she resists (she alludes specifically to new historicism and cultural materialism here) and a traditional Romantic criticism whose priorities, she senses, may have had their day. Despite various knowing disclaimers, for instance, about her earlier 'new-critical' formalism, Norvig describes her interpretive activity in the study as the discovery of the 'formal, imaginal intention of the work'; and there is a curious theoretical belatedness about the book's project that makes it uncertain of itself methodologically and divided against itself conceptually. For Norvig, Blake should be read as an 'archetypal psychologist' who, in the illustrations to Bunyan, unfolds a series of 'variant individual visions of unvarying archetypal states'. Though she gestures towards a historicist account of Blake's relation to the traditions of Bunyan illustration - contrasting Blake's conceptually based designs, for instance, with the pictorial emphasis of many eighteenth-century illustrators -- Norvig nonetheless abstracts Blake's aesthetic from the history she usefully outlines. A characteristic manoeuvre is thus to swallow the historical in the archetypal, and to take Blake as a visionary guide in a mental pilgrimage whose status remains transcendental. 'As mental travellers', she writes, 'who rest in contemporary events and places, we need the images of art to perceive and experience our own archetypal morphology'; and it is Blake who, unsurprisingly, educates the reader into a 'visionary hermeneutics' that enables the perception and transcendence of particular and obfuscating mental states. Norvig's Blake relentlessly psychologises Bunyan, and she argues that the illustrations to the Progress offer a developed 'psychopoetic reading' of the theological structures of Bunyan's narrative. Christian's struggle with Apollyon, for instance, may be a contest with Satanic power for Bunyan; but in Blake, says Norvig, it is a meeting with the 'negativity of the individual psyche', a struggle in which the self confronts its own repressed libidinal energy. In her readings of each of the Progress designs, Norvig offers full and often rewarding interpretations of pictorial and iconographic details, though many of the elements in the designs are rather heavy-handedly psychologised in the service of her primary contention that Blake's drawings are the graphic representation of 'the imagination of a single, main character bent on dreaming up his own agents and strategies of awakening'. Norvig argues that Blake's psychologization of Bunyan's narrative comes about through an identification between the 'dreamer and dream-content' - terms that remain sharply distinguished in Bunyan - and that, because of this, the whole series becomes a pilgrimage less in salvation than in 'self-dreaming and soul-making'. She concludes the book with one of a number of Hegelian flourishes, revealingly citing M.H. Abrams' account of Hegelian Romanticism as a theodicy of self-unification; for, similarly, Blake's Bunyan designs, according to Norvig, chart an odyssey of alienation and of the 'return of the self to the self'. However, if Norvig ends up framing Blake's illustrations as a narrative of psychological integration, one cannot help wondering what a less Hegelianised and organicist perspective on Blake - and on Romanticism - might offer in a full reading of these still little-studied designs.

**Steven Vine University of Wales, Swansea**

**Peter J. Sorensen. William Blake's Recreation of Gnostic Myth: Resolving the Apparent Incongruities. Salzburg University Studies (Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Romantic Reassessment 118). Edwin Mellen Press, 1995. Pp. 155.**

Peter Sorensen sets out to prove 'that Blake was, first and foremost, a Christian gnostic'. In making his case, Sorensen defies current trends in literary research to produce a strikingly unfashionable account of Blake, one that 'will no doubt be offensively reductive to some critics'. In contrast to those who focus on the pluralities, fissures and disruptions produced by Blake's challenge to conventional reading habits, Sorensen looks to a unifying order in the light of which such complications lose their significance: 'once we understand the premises of gnosticism', he argues, 'apparent incongruities in Blake's work resolve themselves, and we at last have objective criteria for claiming that Blake's work constitutes a monomyth'. In fact Sorensen invites us not only to understand the premises of gnosticism, but also to accept some of them. Central to the study is the idea of 'a personal revelation about Christianity' which may be influenced by external factors but is ultimately independent of them. I shall outline three of the critical consequences of this idea. First, historical issues are relegated to a secondary position. The major gnostic model against which Sorensen measures Blake's work is drawn not from texts known to have been available in the Romantic period, but from the Nag Hammadi codices, discovered and published long after Blake's death. What Sorensen finds most interesting in Blake's myth is the pattern of belief or cosmology that can be abstracted from it, and so the contemporary contexts of the writing -- literary, social and political -- become relatively unimportant. Sorensen insists, for example, that Blake's portrayal of females is not determined by cultural stereotypes, but is typical of gnostic practice, which is 'anything but stereotypical'. Of Blake's females Sorensen writes: 'their fall into Urizenic materiality is a dramatic if miscalculated act of power and love on their part to redeem mankind, demonstrating that Blake did not partake of traditional culture or views even when writing about women'. The demonstration may seem bewilderingly illogical to those who cannot accept the transcendent nature of the gnostic monomyth, but is perhaps conclusive to those who do. A second consequence of the gnostic approach is the resolution of apparent contradictions. The monomyth requires consistency, since 'the gnostics firmly believed that our world and all things upon it are the decadent creation of the demiurge, not of the true God'. Blake can be assimilated to this negative view if he is seen as a dualist, who ultimately renounces not only limited visions of the body, but also the body in itself, and all of the 'vegetable world'. Although Blake's work includes not only dark and often horrific visions of a Urizenic creation, but also celebratory visions of a world in which everything that lives is holy, these more exuberant visions must be implicitly qualified. Support for this interpretation is found in Blake's ambiguous representations of the garden, which Sorensen relates to the gnostic view that Eden is a 'demiurgic delusion'. The insistence on a single (if at time ambiguous) view works to reconcile, or undermine, Blake's contraries -- so that the tyger and the lamb lie down together in corporeal decadence. It is a view which some of Blake's readers may associate with the 'Spectre'. A third consequence of the Sorensen's approach is that it makes language appear not as a slippery system of differential signs, but as a veil which reveals or obscures an ideal form. In The

Book of Urizen, for example, some aspects of the monomyth are identified clearly (in Sorensen's reading the 'eternals' are firmly related to the plural deities of gnostic tradition, while Urizen himself is, of course, a version of the demiurge). But 'the structural integrity of The Book of Urizen as poetry obscures some of the specific attributes of the demiurge'. The conflict between poetic and Gnostic integrity is resolved by discounting the obscurities -- among which Sorensen later includes 'the figure of Orc and the theme of revolution', which are 'both flawed perceptions of the truth'. At one point Sorensen claims that 'the poems convey truth only as they are read by those who possess poetic genius -- the interpretative keys of gnostic vision'. For some readers this may call to mind Swedenborg's claims to the Truth, and Blake's angry annotation: 'Lies & Priestcraft'. But Sorensen is convinced that Blake was not 'ill-disposed toward the idea of priesthood'. There would seem to be little possibility of genuine interchange between Sorensen's position and the mainstream of contemporary criticism, since they are founded on assumptions that negate each other. Readers who do not share Sorensen's premises are unlikely to accept his general conclusions, although they will find many incidental suggestions and insights to consider, and a vivid example of the desire for an origin that escapes the play of signs and the complications of history. Andrew Lincoln Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London

David Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv + 357. Hb £48 Distance contextualizes. For his contemporaries it was probably as hard to see Newman as a romantic as it is for us today not to see him as one. For obvious reasons, most twentieth-century studies of Newman have been by Roman Catholics, and have tended to concentrate on his ideas within a Catholic context. Though the late John Coulson was also himself a Catholic, his ground-breaking book, *Newman and the Common Tradition* (1970) was the first to show in any detail Newman's enormous debt to the English Romantics, and, in particular, to Coleridge. Other similarly-oriented studies followed, including my own *Romanticism and Religion* (1976). Later works, such as Stephen Thomas's *Newman and Heresy* (1991), perhaps to redress earlier Anglican neglect, have looked in greater detail at the romanticism of Newman's early Anglican years -- and Goslee's book belongs to this category. Given the substantial size of his bibliography, it is both odd and entirely symptomatic that Goslee does not mention Newman and the Common Tradition, but only a later (and much inferior) work by Coulson. Coulson's sometimes ponderous but compressed and allusive style reflects a corresponding complexity of thinking that is altogether alien to Goslee's sharp clarity, wit and studied irreverence. For him, Newman is less a guru than a case-history. Thus he observes that 'Like some other important figures in the history of Romanticism, Newman has two childhoods: one pieced together by scholars, the other created within his own project of retrospective self-construction'. It is a self-construction that he sees taking over every aspect of his life, and in places he is openly Freudian in his interpretation of Newman's thought, suggesting, for instance, that he simply substitutes the Church's authority for that of his mother, or observing that 'while he came to acknowledge that his mentors had offered valuable, if partial religious insights, he could never fully reconcile himself to his siblings'.

Goslee shows how Newman's astonishing capacity for interpreting his own feelings as coming from beyond himself was at once the source of his greatest strength and some of his worst delusions--not to mention quarrels with others close to him. Yet, to Goslee's credit, there is much more to this analysis than simply an argument *ad hominem*. Newman may brazenly project his own feelings and experiences into the landscape of his theology, but, unlike most patients on the psychiatrist's couch, Goslee shows him as almost preternaturally aware of what he is doing. 'Even deferring any discussion of Marx and Nietzsche', he writes, 'we can see that in Newman's naive analogy between the judgmental voice of God and the equally judgmental voices of parents, he has virtually defined the Freudian superego'. The problem for any would-be analyst of Newman is that no one has ever been as interested in the origins and processes of his thought as Newman himself. In some ways naive and totally self-absorbed in his own intuitions of a divine providence guiding his every footstep, Newman can then astonish the reader with the devastating realism of such observations as this in his *Parochial Sermons*: 'Religious men cannot but feel, in various ways, that His providence is guiding them...; yet when they attempt to put their finger upon the times and places, the traces of His presence disappear... Who has not had thoughts come upon him with a sort of mysterious force, for his warning and direction ? ... but [God] seems so frequently to undo what he has done, and to suffer counterfeits of His tokens, that a conviction of his wonder-working presence can but exist in the individual himself'. Such matters are best pondered privately, for, as he admits elsewhere, 'It is not too much to say that the stepping by which great geniuses scale the mountains of truth is as unsafe and precarious to men in general, as the ascent of a skilful mountaineer up a literal crag. It is a way which they alone can take; and its justification lies in their success'. This does indeed, as Goslee argues, present a highly Romantic portrait of Newman's thinking. What is perhaps less clear is whether he thinks that this internalized Romanticism is typical only of Newman's Anglican period, or whether (as I certainly believe) it informs equally the second half of his life as Catholic. In that sense, his cut-off at 1845 is arbitrary. Similarly, Goslee never really addresses the question of whether Newman's deployment of Romantic ideas in his theology produces original insights or merely follows predictable paths. Though he has given us perhaps the most human account yet of the formation of Newman's personality and ideas, it is somewhat harder to find in these pages the reason why those ideas might still be of relevance and interest to Anglicans and Catholics alike in the late twentieth century.

**Stephen Prickett University of Glasgow**

**Stephen Bann, ed. *Frankenstein, Creation and Monstrosity*: London Reaktion Books, 1994. Pp. 215. Pb. £10-95** The title of this book is misleading. Though the first three essays are primarily concerned to interpret Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, subsequent essays significantly broaden the scope of the collection to include exploration of the theme of 'creation and monstrosity' as it appears in a wide range of nineteenth and twentieth century forms of cultural production. In each case, however (with perhaps one exception), Mary Shelley's novel is explicitly identified as occupying a defining moment in the evolution of thinking on the ethics of creation, and the phenomenon of monstrosity. Elizabeth Bronfen's essay, 'Rewriting the Family:

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein in its Biographical/Textual Context*, provides the reader with a familiar enough place from which to start, Harold Bloom's theory of 'creative misreading'. *Frankenstein*, suggests Bronfen, may be 'interpreted as a form of misreading and rewriting of the texts by her parents, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin'. To illustrate this case of 'creative misreading' Bronfen explains that she intends to use Bloom's thesis 'far more literally than he intended, so as to look at the way Mary and Percy Shelley's self-conception as authors emerged in a response that significantly merges the spiritual with the actual parents'. The essay revolves around the idea of the dynamic consequences of a generation gap within the romantic movement, and around the pervasive influence of autobiography within romantic fictions. The elopement of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Percy Shelley thus reinscribes the work of the authors of *Political Justice* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* for a new generation. The elopement was of course an act which enraged the remaining parent, and arguably set Mary to review the wisdom of the gestures a process which continued as her life with Shelley, Claire Clairmont, Byron and the rest evolved alongside her traumatic experiences as a mother. Bronfen's reading here is broadly in accord with that of Anne K. Mellor. *Frankenstein* is read as a critique not only of the heartless materialism of contemporary political systems, but equally of Shelley's own egocentricity when it comes to mobilising a Romantic 'passion for reforming the world'. For this reason, it is suggested, Mary therefore came to view the novel as her 'hideous progeny': 'In her own life she was forced to learn that the intellectual legacy of her parents was inextricably interwoven with the monstrosity of being socially outcast'. The final pages of Bronfen's essay tell the depressing tale of a life progressively rewritten to cleanse the record of the impact of its author's radical parents; this includes the progressive defamation of Shelley's first wife Harriet, and the process by which Mary's annotated edition of Shelley's poetry of 1838 worked to transform 'her disruptive life into a conventional bourgeois marriage'. Mary's 'Notes' to the poetry, Bronfen claims, 'effaced all traces of any spiritual debt to Wollstonecraft and Godwin'. Bronfen does not have the space to describe the constant financial pressures and personal difficulties Mary Shelley experienced after her husband's death; we lose therefore something of the heroism of her tale of survival from 1822 to 1851, and with it an ability fully to contextualise the 'fictionalizing biographical rewriting' that marks all her output. Her novels and short stories, even the biographical sketches she wrote, bear witness to the way in which the radical myth of 'Frankenstein', once articulated, became increasingly an object of some embarrassment to its progenitor. It remains, however, a remarkably difficult task to write Mary off as a political reactionary in her latter years. Bronfen is not alone among recent critics in looking for a saving grace, and though she finds one, she has to admit that it constitutes an 'oblique' point. The image of the family that Mary systematically deploys to thwart the radical import of her 'hideous progeny', is, Bronfen argues, only a 'textual body' bearing an implicit 'image of its dissolution'; this renders Mary Shelley's conservatism 'always a phantasy, a replacement'. All the other essays in this collection confirm in various ways the radical, subversive, destabilising implications of *Frankenstein*; by no means all of them share Bronfen's concern with the consequent issues of the relationship of author to text. One notable feature of Crosbie Smith's essay on 'Frankenstein and Natural Magic' is that

Mary Shelley as author hardly features at-all. This is a tightly-focused and well-informed essay on the novel as a work poised between an Enlightenment philosophy of Nature emphasising the virtues of stability and balance, and evolving Romantic perspectives which seek to explore passion and irrationality. The narrator is identified chiefly with Victor Frankenstein, and after that with Walton. Mary Shelley as author is effectively jettisoned after an early mention, and the place she might have occupied as progenitor is replaced by an important facet of the novel's contemporary intellectual context, a keen interest (strongly felt among the Shelley circle) in debating the implications for knowledge of the study of natural magic and natural philosophy. Ludmilla Jordanova concerns herself with a similarly closely defined context for the novel, though she reinstates Mary Shelley at the centre of the creative process. She summarises her thesis by suggesting that Mary Shelley was 'acutely sensitive to areas of uncertainty and ambiguity felt by those who studied medicine and/or the natural sciences and whose relations with the past of their 'disciplines' were being carefully negotiated just at this time'; and she provides further evidence of the centrality of the novel in the major intellectual currents of the day. One consequence of this is to render Frankenstein in some respects far less 'original' than is sometimes suggested or implied, but all the more remarkable for the way it 'tapped into a turbulent unconscious life that was experienced in a variety of ways by practitioners [of scientific/medical enterprises] of the time'. With Louis James's essay, Frankenstein as both character and as novel, the monster, and Mary Shelley herself as author, are effectively set free to make their way through the remainder of the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth. James first reminds us of the pervasiveness of a Shelleyan trope of 'the Monstrous', and of the richness of its critical progeny from Gilbert and Gubar through Levine and Moretti to Botting, Pollin and Hillis Miller. He offers an excellent brief guide for the student through nineteenth-century representations, literary and visual, and on into early twentieth-century film versions. As far as the novel is concerned, the argument here does little more than confirm its hydra-headed indestructibility. The substantial issues raised revolve primarily around the process of cultural recycling. Michael Fried's essay was the exception referred to initially as the one piece which reflects on 'creation and monstrosity' without specific reference to Frankenstein. Fried's concern is literally with the text as material presence, and using several examples, particularly H.G.Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, he argues that the monstrous may be identified with what he calls 'the materiality of writing'. It is an intriguing thesis which Fried has written about elsewhere. He suggests that the creative act of writing contains also a paradoxical will to erase, to regress, to return to the blankness of the unsullied page. The appearance of hideousness, of monsters (in Kipling, Crane and Conrad in addition to Wells) is in fact registering a response to the appearance of text. Fried is well able to make this argument work because the essay is skilfully constructed and his examples well chosen. Beyond the confines of Fried's text, however, the reader may well have their doubts about the broader credibility of such an idiosyncratic approach to the interpretation of texts. The value of the essay is primarily in its ability to provoke further reflection in relation to the other essays; certainly Frankenstein emerges as a ghostly, un-inscribed presence by the end of the piece. Michael Grant's 'The Horror Film and the Symbolic Biology of the Cinematic Monster', discusses the

evolution of the cinematic monster using James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* as his starting point, not Mary Shelley's text. In this respect, Grant is also interestingly different from James, for whom departures from the original Shelleyan model (the origin of the monster's brain for example, or the final dénouement) are still important. After Grant's exploration of the cultural phenomenon of the twentieth-century horror film has significantly loosened the bond with Shelley's text, it becomes even more intriguing to find Jasia Reichardt's 'Artificial Life and the Myth of Frankenstein'. Further broadening the twentieth-century context of 'Creation and Monstrosity' to include robotics, genetic engineering and cybernetics, while pushing us firmly back towards the text and maintaining a very traditional sense of historical perspective, not to mention the articulation of traditional 'green' moral qualms about a range of 'hideous progenies'. Her claim is that it is ultimately Mary Shelley's novel that still has something to say to us, and after what seems a long time away, Mary Shelley reappears in the guise of a much needed prophetess for the late twentieth century. Robert Olerenshaw's essay maintains the importance of a textual base for discussing 'Creation and Monstrosity'. In 'Narrating the Monster' he considers the work of both Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker. Olerenshaw brings us back to nineteenth century issues and themes already raised by Smith, Jordanova and Bronfen; he extends the debate significantly, however, by incorporating Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In the process (as already indicated) important links emerge with Michael Fried's thesis. Olerenshaw examines Peter Brook's Lacanian reading of Mary Shelley's monster, concluding that 'the creature cannot be recognised, identified or circulate as a proper name in the discourse of the other because the creature is unnarratable'. The insistence of a close textual focus comes as a sharp contrast to Reichardt's approach, and an even more marked contrast is set up by the juxtaposition of Olerenshaw's piece and the final essay, Stephen Bann's translation of Jean-Louis Schefer's 'The Bread and the Blood'. Schefer is also concerned to make the comparison between *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, but he does so from a twentieth-century filmic angle, establishing the centrality of religious imagery, and linking this to the reappearance of a Eucharistic controversy which had its origins in the eleventh century. It is specifically in Stoker's *Dracula* that Schefer finds evidence of 'a new lease of life' for the controversy; once more we therefore find ourselves drifting away from Mary Shelley's text. Interesting and appropriate as the theme of life reconstituted undoubtedly is, it does seem less than satisfactory to end this collection with a relatively brief discussion primarily of *Dracula*. With this in mind, it occurred to me - though not normally an advocate of the 'Afterword' - that Stephen Bann's intriguing Introduction, in which he reflects on the subversive, eccentric and frequently distasteful taxidermy of Charles Waterton (son of 'an aristocratic but somewhat decayed Catholic family' who published an account of his travels in South America in 1826), would have done very well as a concluding essay. Waterton quite literally made monsters, and in consequence offered the editor of this volume an excellent opportunity to provide an instructive and entertaining linkage to the various forms of monstrosity explored in the different essays. Here we are indeed brought back to the centrality of Mary Shelley's 'hideous progeny'. In both its range and accessibility, this is an excellent book for students, and an important collection for scholars.

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