

BARS BULLETIN & REVIEW no. 18

BRITISH
ASSOCIATION FOR
ROMANTIC
STUDIES

Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*. Oxford English Monographs. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1999. Pp. 303 pages. £45. ISBN 0 19 818397 6.

This is the book every Coleridge scholar would love to have written. It takes Coleridge on, in a spirit of capacious forgiveness for his faults, and makes available to any reader who is willing to go the distance a way of seeing Coleridge's achievements, along with his failings, as uniquely interesting and 'useful'. Perry's authorial presence is erudite and judicious, a companion through the labyrinth, an enthusiast who can be ironic about his enthusiasms. And yet (a phrase that virtually structures this book, so I have no compunction in using it here) -- and yet, this is not a book that is likely to sway Coleridge's severer critics.

Perry's distinctive strategy is to take the crucial accusation made against Coleridge -- that he was muddled and irresolute -- and make it the basis of his approach. Critics from Hazlitt to Wellek have reproved Coleridge for adopting contradictory positions, wanting to be on both sides of too many arguments, and (above all) failing to complete what he undertook. William Morris's verdict, 'muddle-brained metaphysician' (quoted, p. 8), sums up a view still widely held.

To Perry, however, muddle is a many-splendoured thing. Borrowing from Empson the phrase 'more fruitful sorts of muddle' (p. 9), and being careful to distinguish this 'good muddle', which has 'an internal arrangement of conflicting callings or visions of reality' (p. 11), from mere incoherence, Perry endeavours to see the strength in Coleridgean weakness, arguing that Coleridge is useful precisely because he was 'productively indecisive' (p. 263). To be incapable of giving up the Many for the sake of the One, Nature for the sake of Mind, or the impressionable self for self-sufficing genius, may actually be a good thing. This approach cleverly invites those of us who have always felt slightly defensive about Coleridge to believe that we really knew all along where his true worth lay. Unlike the pedantic Southey, the rebarbative Hazlitt, Coleridge would not stop himself thinking before he had reached the full measure of an intellectual problem. Inconsistency and lack of system are a price worth paying for receptivity and complexity.

There are certainly insights to be won from this kind of reconstruction, and Perry can persuade a sympathetic reader that behind those uncompleted projects there could have been a Coleridge resembling the figure depicted here. But by choosing to play variations on one broadly-defined theme, Perry sacrifices the possibility of historicizing, of connecting Coleridge's intellectual turns with the social and political changes and movements of thought that took place in his time. Maybe historicism -- by itself -- is insufficient, but Perry seems over-fond of phrases like 'the whole range of Coleridge's thinking' (pp. 158, 170). He is certainly aware that Coleridge's religious, political, and philosophical orientation changed between (say) 1797 and 1817. He glimpses a 'late' Coleridge, in whom Reason allegedly tyrannizes over the once-thrilling world of Nature (p. 200), but his focus on consistency within inconsistencies usually makes him interpret the later phase as a reprise of an earlier

one. So Coleridge's short-lived adoption of Fichte to correct Kant, and then of Schelling to correct Fichte, is represented as 'replaying the mixed feelings he had already experienced' in the 1790s (p. 137). This will not satisfy stricter readers, who might respond that it is one thing to struggle with 'mixed feelings' and quite another to work out a philosophical solution. And the contrarious reader is inclined to ask whether there were there any events, or intellectual developments, that made some measurable difference to Coleridge.

What can be found here, however, is an extraordinarily rich and skilfully-woven tapestry expounding Coleridge's divisions. Chapter 1 is devoted to the topic of 'division', arguing that while ostensibly seeking the One, STC was 'a pluralist in spite of himself' (p. 21). The second chapter focuses on the 'One Life' side of the dialectic, constantly reminding us that he was never a wholehearted Spinozan, nor a wholehearted Platonist. The third, 'Atoning Plurality', puts Coleridge's realism front and centre: the real matter of the conversation poems, Perry suggests, is 'relationship between the mind's truths and nature's truths' (p. 146). Chapter 4, 'The Ethics of Imagining', explores the mixture of benefits and disadvantages deriving from Coleridge's peculiar sense of dependency on others, his 'longing for self-oblivion' (p. 167), and his ability to lose himself in contemplation of nature. The concluding chapter presents Coleridge's critical assessments of Milton and Shakespeare as exemplifying, respectively, the idealizing, drawing-all-into-himself type and the self-dissolving, ego-less type of poetic genius, with Wordsworth selectively portrayed as the mediating example. There is a 'Coda' on 'The Ancient Mariner' as a poem 'poised between . . . unity and . . . chaos' (p. 281).

Books about Coleridge usually end up sacrificing one or more aspects of their subject in order to present a coherent view. Perry's singular achievement is to have brought all these partial Coleridges within his three hundred pages. Except for the 'political Coleridge' (an omission that will annoy some and please others), it is hard to think of any aspect that does not feature in Perry's wide-ranging study. The equable, witty tone of Perry's authorial voice is sustained throughout the book, and it is this tone (rather than any identifiable theory) that is its unifying principle. Perry's critical intelligence has been well schooled in the British tradition that numbers Empson, Grigson, Kermode, Barbara Hardy, John Beer, and John Bayley among its brightest stars. This book shows how vigorous the tradition remains.

Anthony John Harding
University of Saskatchewan

David Vallins, *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism: Feeling and Thought*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000. Pp. 260. £45. ISBN 0 333 73745 8.

Vallins's study focuses on Coleridge as the 'ultimate exemplar of romantic psychology' (p. 10), proponent of a newly secularized discipline that both synthesizes and supplants the older categories of epistemology, metaphysics and theology. The insistence of this distinctive quality of introspective analysis grounds the persistent, grandiose, but often somewhat hazy claims made for Coleridge's centrality to the period, and allows a forcefully holistic reading of 'his writings in diverse genres and its superficially unrelated topics' (p. 1). The oeuvre undoubtedly sprawls, but Vallins discerns, usually persuasively, an underlying consistency between early poetry, mid-period prose writings, and later, more explicitly theocratic meditation. The paradoxes of articulating non-linguistic states and the potential aporias of mind-body dualism are expertly negotiated, and the familiar dichotomy of empiricist and idealist

philosophical contexts circumvented through analogies established between progressive ascent in Hartley's associationism and Schelling's evolutionary dynamics (The more general treatment of Coleridgean biology as simultaneously plastically emergent and rigidly preordained is particularly fine [pp. 127-40]).

The postulates are highly traditional, insofar as M. H. Abrams's famous (or notorious) quasi-Hegelian scheme can be intermittently glimpsed: the common motif of romanticism being 'a desire to transcend alienation by achieving a conviction of the unity of self and other' (p. 3). Even if Coleridge is regarded as 'supremely vivid instance', the historicist counter-arguments against such archetypal 'patterns of negation and transcendence which dominate Romantic consciousness' might be engaged at greater length (p. 7). The potential stasis of the taxonomy, however, is averted by the function of emotion as both origin and telos, motive and outcome, for the process of thought. The boundaries between the carefully differentiated triad of genres, poetry, philosophy, and literary theory, dissolve when confronted with the sheer elusiveness of feeling and numerous classic formulations (for example 'a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order') are exposed as fragile, even potentially incoherent, in this context (pp. 88-95).

Probably rather more is conceded than necessary to the priority of 'Imaginative and intellectual activity' over the 'external world' (p. 2). At times 'the perfect alternative to reality implies very real imperfections of the world from which those visions of transcendence arose' (p. 3); even 'intensely painful experience' is predicated on a 'rational perception' of dissatisfaction (p. 4), and so dialectically converges on a higher plane with a broader romantic critique of 'alienation . . . arising from . . . popular modes of thought' (p. 9). There also, however, seems a recurrent yearning for emotion to provide a kind of phenomenological a priori as an end in itself, which might perhaps have addressed at greater length the counter-arguments, broadly, but not exclusively, Wittgensteinian, that emotion is not some mystical inner essence but intrinsically interactional and therefore situated in the social realm.

If the ultimate inadequacy of each and every representation of feeling is granted, what saves Coleridge's own exposition from the same charge, and so vitiates the central claim of his superior psychological insight? The problem, which first arises in the difficulty of establishing criteria to distinguish feeling from delusion in enthusiasm (pp. 49-65), recurs in accentuated form in the larger issue of sublime as a 'conviction (or feeling) of truths which have little specific content apart from the idea of their inexpressibleness' (p. 5). Firstly, this experience seems unduly narrowly defined in strict Kantian terms (pp. 161-62) rather than as a tradition of internally proliferating debate (abundantly confirmed by Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla's, *The Sublime: a Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. [CUP, 1996]: reviewed BARS 16): one might now be more inclined to talk of plural sublimines, with complex gender co-ordinates within them, given the considerable indebtedness of Coleridge's verse to Smith and Barbauld. Secondly, it is argued that Coleridge's prose, through its very failure to define emotion, 'encourages reverence both for the thinking it expresses and for the sublime object it refers to' (p. 10): thinking becomes a mode of divine creativity subject to an 'indefinableness whose energetic process of self-criticism reflects the elusiveness of its object' (p. 10). The reliance on a notion of truth as process is vulnerable to the standard riposte to the procedures of reader-response criticism (whose influence is apparent from the initial coupling of 'introspection and self-reflexivity' as synonyms [p. 1]). Empirically, as a reception argument, where are the documented responses of contemporaries undergoing such an experience as opposed to, say, the tedium and exasperation more generally expressed

[p. 160])? Methodologically, the decoding of complex manipulation itself becomes potentially monologic, even authoritarian, inviting collusion between authorial strategy and readerly sophistication, united in disdain for less agile exegetes. Finally, it does scant justice to the diversity, range, and unpredictability of Coleridge's writing (elsewhere treated with exemplary respect and attentiveness) to posit one single and uniform end-product: why, for example, should not the dramatization of somatic responses – bowel complaints, toothaches (pp. 42-48) – be admired in its own right

Steve Clark
St Mary's University College

Author's Response to Stephen Clark's Review

The phrase 'Psychology of Romanticism' in the title of this book is meant to be understood in two senses: firstly, as referring to the psychological patterns most characteristic of Romanticism, and secondly, as denoting Coleridge's psychological analyses (and self-analyses) in particular. Notwithstanding the diversity of the (recently-extended) canon, I suggest, Romanticism can still be understood as more than a specific phase of history, albeit its distinguishing features are more prominent in some authors of the period than in others. Even in 'high' Romantic authors such as Coleridge, however, the diversity of attitudes and values invites explanation in terms of their subjective value to the author, or the psychological purposes which they fulfil. Such an analysis is especially inviting in the case of Coleridge, not only because his contradictoriness (like that of Romanticism in general) would otherwise seem irresolvable, but also because of the subtlety and detail with which he explores the relationships between different aspects of mental functioning, and especially the subjective value of intellectual and creative effort. 'Romantic psychology', however, is never described as a 'discipline' pursued by Coleridge, nor as 'supplanting' metaphysics or epistemology. Rather, I suggest that much of Coleridge's writing effectively merges psychology with metaphysics and epistemology through the theory of a single productive process underlying all aspects of consciousness, in which the act of perception is seen as an earlier or lower form of the imaginative power expressed in works of philosophy and art. My claims as to Coleridge's centrality to the period are based partly on his pre-eminence as an exponent of the idealist theories most characteristic of 'high' Romanticism, partly on the unique rigour and comprehensiveness with which he analyzes the literature, aesthetics, philosophy, and science of the period, and partly on the vividness with which he exemplifies contrasting Romantic styles and ideologies, from the radical optimism of his earliest writings to the conservative idealism of the latest. The circular and mutual influence of thought and feeling (in the sense of sensation, as well as emotion and intuition) which is described as animating these diverse aspects of Coleridge's writings offers an alternative both to an idealist emphasis on the originating power of intellect or imagination, and to a materialist emphasis on physical existence as the submerged focus of Romantic discourse. The interactions of the social and the physical with the creative and intellectual, indeed, form an important topic of chapters two, three, and four, while Coleridge's analysis of dreams is shown to involve a (perhaps unexpected) emphasis on the value of the physical as a liberation from metaphysical uncertainty. The role of gender in the sublime is mentioned in relation to Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, both of whom are seen as having rather more in common with Coleridgean transcendence than some recent critics have argued, though the idealist framework of Coleridge's later thought makes Kant more useful than Burke for understanding its

aesthetics. The process of thinking which often underlies the Coleridgean sublime, however, is never described as 'a mode of divine creativity': rather, its indefinable energy is compared by Coleridge with that of the deity - an analogy whose metaphysical and moral implications are explored in many of his best-known works. Though Coleridge occasionally expresses the Hegelian view of 'truth as process', moreover, my emphasis is on the aesthetic value he attaches to a continual process of inquiry and self-criticism which liberates us from every static mode of thought. No 'reception' argument is used to support this view, though since Coleridge's work is notable for its vigorous questioning of the conventions of eighteenth-century thought and literature, many readers naturally expressed responses very different from those he explicitly sought to achieve. No 'single and uniform end-product', moreover, is described as emerging from his writing, but rather a complex and ever-shifting process of inquiry, both informing and informed by his emotional and intuitive responses to contemporary and personal circumstances. My emphasis on the extent to which ideas depend on intuition, emotion, and sensation, and my detailed illustration of these relationships in Coleridge's work, thus raises important questions about the extent to which either 'matter' or 'mind' can be described as primary and originative, and invites a reassessment of the familiar division between 'historicist' and 'transcendentalist' positions.

David Vallins

Affiliation to be supplied

Jennifer Breen, ed., *The Selected Poems of Joanna Baillie 1762-1851*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999. Pp. 206. £40. ISBN 0 7190 5474 5.

This volume is a welcome publication because, until its appearance, and if we exclude the numerous anthological selections, the only extensive printed source of Baillie's verse was the Georg Olms facsimile reprint (1976) of her *Dramatic and Poetical Works* of 1851. However, even though the cover announces *The Selected Poems of Joanna Baillie*, a more accurate title would be *The Selected Lyrical Poems* as, for Jennifer Breen, this is the most representative mode of Baillie's so far unrecognized contribution to Romantic poetry. From the very opening sentences of the introduction, the editor makes clear that her 'concern in this book is with Baillie's lyric poetry' (p. 1) which sustains her claim that the Scottish poet's verse is 'demonstrably the equal of and the formative link between Robert Burns's Scottish poetry and William Wordsworth's meditations on nature'. Accordingly, Breen's selection does not contain any of Baillie's longer narrative poems, such as *Ahalia Bae* (1841), or her *Metrical Legends* (1821), although there are frequent incursions into ballad-style narratives such as 'Sir Maurice, a Ballad' (1823) or the earlier anecdotic poem 'A Disappointment' (1790).

The editor's clearly stated opinion is that, if read with an open mind, Baillie's poems 'should be accorded the same accolades that we give to the Scots English songs of Robert Burns and the meditative Nature poetry of William Wordsworth' (p. 21). And in pursuit of its aim the book does many admirable things. First, it regularly goes back to the earliest version of a text, giving clear indications about the original source as well as useful contextual references to the poem's inception or publication history mostly taken from Baillie's correspondence. Breen's notes to the poems are useful and informative at different levels, as they are intended both for the common reader and for a more specialized audience. Their function, however, is not helped by the

fact that it is not always easy to move quickly from poem to notes because these are collected at the end of the book and there is no clear cross-referencing, by page number for instance. The introduction is well-balanced and to the point -- neither too condensed nor too sprawling -- complete with a succinct but relevant biographical account as well as interesting sections on content and form in Baillie's poetry, her use of language (Scots and English), and the position of her verse between the eighteenth-century and the Romantic traditions.

When it comes to the most important part of the collection, the texts themselves, Breen orders them chronologically or in the order in which Baillie had placed them in the original collections - *Poems* (1790), her edited *A Collection of Poems* (1823) and *Fugitive Verses* (1840). The selected texts then seem to fall into certain specific thematic areas or modes, thus identifying some selected portions of Baillie's production which may help the comparison with Burns or Wordsworth. One of such modes is represented by the songs written for 'national airs', Scottish but also Welsh and Irish, and for the large majority the outcome of a collaboration with the anthologist George Thomson. Baillie's stakes in the Romantic fashion for 'Celtic' melodies and themes are well summarised in 'Sweet Power of Song', composed at Thomson's request, and which interweaves intimations drawn from the Welsh, Scottish and Irish musical and poetic traditions. As far as this mode is concerned, the introduction is an important instrument to trace the constant parallels, comparisons and contrasts between Baillie's output and Burns's precedents. In particular, the editor draws attention to the fact that Baillie was already recasting traditional Scottish songs in Burns's fashion even before the male poet's death or before starting her collaboration with George Thomson. Finally, the poet's involvement with local projects, and practical related issues such as the transcription of the West Mid Scots dialect, is put in relation to Baillie's difficult move to London in 1783, an event that represented a more or less drastic separation from Scotland and whose repercussions on her activity are perceptively assessed in the introduction.

Another important thematic area in Breen's selection is that of the everyday, the domestic and the diminutive as distinctively 'feminine' domains in women's Romantic verse. This group contains poetry dedicated to children and small animals. The heading of 'family verse' then also includes the masterful poem in heroic couplets 'Lines to Agnes Baillie on Her Birthday', composed around 1825, and whose anecdotal quality brings it close to earlier texts about village characters and their private stories. Further, Baillie's well-known versions of eighteenth-century rural, season verse - 'A Winter Day' and 'A Summer Day' - are here reproduced alongside poems from the collection of 1790, contextualizing and complicating the ways in which her treatment may be both supportive and subversive of the pastoral tradition. Breen's footnotes to these two extensive blank-verse compositions also bring out the intertextual, citational relation with Crabbe, Wordsworth and Thomson. Finally, the themes of movement and technology - represented at best in 'Address to a Steam Vessel' (1823) - confirm that Baillie's poetry might exceed the local, the domestic or the Dutch-miniature accuracy of her village scenes in order to incorporate visions of progress, movement and a wider geographical horizon.

It is of course impossible to exhaust all the thematic areas of Baillie's verse, even in a selected corpus like Breen's. However, the inclusion of a lyric 'To Mrs Siddons', a contribution to *A Collection of Poems* (1823), brings to the fore the visible absence of other female voices in this volume. The poem dedicated to the famous actress, a personal acquaintance of Baillie's, is a hint at the numerous contacts between the poet and several female figures in the contemporary literary scene, especially after her

move to London. Her position in the contemporaneous literary world and a complex network of women writers does not emerge fully either in the selection of verse or in the introduction. One possible, perhaps even obvious, reason for this omission is that these connections are only tangentially related to Breen's project of rescuing Baillie's lyrical poetry and of placing her in the company of Burns and Wordsworth.

The introduction, accordingly, situates Baillie's verse alongside Crabbe's, Thomson's, Wordsworth's, Stephen Duck's, Scott's and Burns's. The purpose is to set off Baillie's unique achievements in recreating a primitive Scottish voice, in evoking a poetry of simplicity and in order to find her place 'among the first of eighteenth-century poets to empathize with her subjects' (p. 7). Before and, it seems, in competition with Wordsworth, Baillie developed a theory and a practice of writing verse about genuine feelings and the condition of the common man or woman. Her poetry on children or the dialogue between children and grown-ups is a forerunner of Wordsworth's poetry as well as an example of the new eighteenth-century interest in childhood. And the volume provides further material to substantiate the comparison/contention with Wordsworth by reproducing Baillie's 'Introductory Discourse' from *A Series of Plays* (1798) as well as the 'Preface' to her later volume *Fugitive Verses*, in which Baillie herself alludes to the closeness between her poetry and Robert Burns'.

Jennifer Breen's accurate annotations, her constant attention to intertextual links, and the accumulation of diverse materials, all tend to support her claim that a just appreciation of Baillie must result in a redefinition of Romanticism and that 'Literary histories of the Romantic Period need to be revised in order to take into account Baillie's original Poems (1790) about rural people's lives, which predate Wordsworth's similar poems on that topic' (p. 21). At first glance, the recovering of Baillie as a primary lyrical voice in Romantic literature seems to be restricted to finding a place for her between the canonical Scottish and English voices of Burns and Wordsworth. While this may seem to be the redrawing of a well-known picture, Breen's point is that a serious look at Baillie obliges us to reconsider established priorities in Romantic literary historiography and the usual awarding of precedence. Stimulating also in its contentiousness, this selection of verse is an altogether rewarding book that, while striving to position Baillie in a Romantic lyrical canon, uncovers the idiosyncrasies and unique voice of a female poet caught between Scotland and England, male and female versification, lyrical and narrative expression and the cultural contexts of eighteenth-century and Romantic literature.

Diego Saglia

Università degli Studi di Parma

Deirdre Coleman (ed), *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s. The Literature of Travel, Exploration and Empire*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992. Pp. xviii + 247. pb £17.99. ISBN 0 7185 0150 0.

Despite a somewhat opaque main title, this volume presents an extensively annotated edition of two little-known travel narratives by women of the 1790s. The first is the account of the Sierra Leone colony written by Anna Maria Falconbridge, published as *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone* (1794), and the second is Mary Ann Parker's *A Voyage Round the World* (1795). Expertly edited by Deirdre Coleman for a promising series entitled 'The Literature of Travel, Exploration and Empire', with enlightening notes and handsome contemporary illustrations, both texts are here given their first modern

edition (although both have been previously published in facsimile in recent decades). As Coleman suggests in her insightful introduction, the two colonies, like the two women, share common projects. In this way, students and researchers both of women's writing, travel literature and the history of empire, will profit from reading this edition of Falconbridge and Parker's travels. In their analysis of the unsettled future of the infant colonies, and their descriptions of the difficulties faced by women travellers, the two narratives resonate with the eighteenth-century debates on the place of women within the colonising project and the nature of female authorship. Mary Ann Parker's narrative is the less compelling production. Written after the death of her husband, Captain John Parker of the *Gorgon*, *Man of War*, Parker makes clear that she writes as a widow, to raise money for her children. Written quickly from memory, her *Voyage* is at times a sketchy, even sparse, account. Although she found the infant colony of Sydney 'novel and agreeable', she has little to say, as signalled by her own complaint that her descriptive powers are disabled by her 'female pen'. While Parker frequently opposes her self to her project, Anna Maria Falconbridge constructs her female gender as a distinct vantage point from which uncomfortable political observations might be drawn. Her *Two Voyages* offers a more substantial document, both as a literary endeavour, and as an account of the travails of colonial enterprise. Here Falconbridge perceives her femininity as a positive contribution to the construction of the colony, figuring her self and gender, through versions of domesticity and polite society, as constitutive of the new colony's civilised aspect. The account is a significant contribution to the history of Sierra Leone. Simultaneously a benevolent charity, a joint-stock company and a government sponsored colonial settlement, the Sierra Leone colony had an illuminating relationship to the history of agitation against the slave trade in Britain. Sierra Leone was established as a refuge, or a prison, for the free but poor African population of England. As the colony's company Report of 1791 noted,

About five years since, the streets of London swarming with a number of Blacks in the most distressed situation, who had no prospect of subsisting in this country but by depredations on the public, or by common charity, the humanity of some respectable Gentlemen was excited toward these unhappy objects. They were accordingly collected to the number of above 400, and together with 60 whites, chiefly women of the lowest sort, in ill health, and of bad character, they were sent out at the charge of government to Sierra Leone.

Falconbridge, as the wife of the Agent, was in a position to offer a comprehensive account of the colony. Her narrative recounts its establishment, the manners and customs of colonial life, and the difficulties attending the colony's first years. Amongst her personal trials was the death of her husband, after a prolonged slide into melancholy and madness (events which she meets with a curious, if somewhat chilling, equanimity). Falconbridge's proximity to the colony's administration gives her a privileged view of the colony's fitful attempts to secure itself strong foundations. Her analysis ranges widely and freely: the colony, in her opinion, was challenged by serious managerial and political problems both in its relation to its goodwilled metropolitan promoters and the competitive rivalry of the adjacent African regimes. As her narrative reveals, Falconbridge perceived that despite the philanthropic motives of its promoters in the metropolis, the Sierra Leone project could not be separated from the system of Atlantic slavery its establishment seemed to criticise, nor from the ideologies of race embedded in those institutions. By the end of her narrative, Falconbridge is reconciled not only to the fact that the slave trade

continues in her locality (which she witnesses at the nearby slave factory of Bance Island), but that her own future relies on it (confirmed when she engages in a slaving voyage of her own to the West Indies). Later sections detail a remarkably seamless transition in Falconbridge's thinking, as she moves from a committed abolitionism to a more troubled acceptance of slavery. In her description of her voyage home to London on board a slave ship, described almost without wonder, she finds the slave trade to be highly organized, economically efficient and conducted on principles recognisably humanitarian. As her discourse veers towards pro-slavery argument Falconbridge's *Two Voyages* perhaps reveals a rarely perceived sophistication in contemporary notions of slavery and empire, neatly revealing the proximity of race ideology to abolitionist discourse. Her new-found respect for the slave trade is reinforced by the seeming calm with which she perceives the burning in Kingston, Jamaica, of Paine and Wilberforce in effigy: as if by 1793 abolitionist impulses are to be construed as dangerously incendiary. Deirdre Coleman is to be commended for bringing these works of women's travel writing to a wider public; although in the end it is likely that the light they cast on the history of empire is their most enlightening aspect.

Markman Ellis

Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London

**Charles Donelan, *Romanticism and Male Fantasy in Byron's Don Juan*
Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000. Pp. 195. £42.50. ISBN 0 333 76029 8**

Much work was done from the 1980s by Karl Kroeber and others to reconsider the role that fantasy, beyond narrowly defined sub-genres such as fairy tale, plays in literature in general and in Romantic literature in particular. Charles Donelan's new study of Byron's *Don Juan* is to be welcomed as a interesting contribution to this enquiry; and also, and somewhat more problematically, to the wider question of how (male) Romantic poet's engaged with the various ideological shapings of gender and national identity at the turn of the nineteenth century.

We are promised both a 'powerful' and a 'surprising' Byron. However, many of the basic assumptions here are familiar from the work on Byron's heroines by, amongst others, Caroline Franklin and Malcolm Kelsall, and on the poem's relationship to Regency England by Peter W. Graham -- here, in particular, the exhaustive consideration of the anglicization of Juan's name in Chapter 1 adds little to Graham's analysis. A promised 'pop culture' Byron makes rather fleeting appearances too. What, arguably, is new here is the contention that Byron's iconoclastic use of fantasy itself is central to not only an understanding of *Don Juan*, but of its on-going critical reception. The point is made that 'Don Juan practices its fantasy as a deliberate failure to follow the rules of sentiment in adventurous narrative' (p.22); and, however much it loses sight of this key word in the shifting methodologies of some of its later chapters, it is in this sense of 'deliberate' playing with the fantasies, about gender and social structures, available to Byron that this study does indeed fulfil its own promise, and justifies its own byronic digressions.

The book's own strengths and weaknesses can be seen, for example, in the second chapter. The focus for this is a re-reading of the encounter with Haidée in Cantos II and III. Drawing on Nigel Leask's work, the argument is well made that this episode is concerned with 'dismantling' the myth of the (male imagined) romantic paradise, which, it is argued, resurfaces in a different guise later in the harem episode, and its role in the emerging discourse of colonialism. Here, as earlier in its consideration of

Donna Julia, the extent to which the heroine bears visible traces of not only the narrator's or Juan's desire, but of other male figures, becomes apparent. As Donelan remarks, in a sense, '[t]he island is Lambro's fantasy' (p. 82), or at least he himself perceives it as such; and, the point of the entire episode, rather than to indulge in or explode one version of a (male) fantasy island, is to illustrate 'the fundamental incompatibility of individual fantasies' (p. 83). Similar incompatibilities can be found in the ways in which the poem presents its other heroines and their fantasized locations, and its ambivalence about contemporary fantasies legitimizing the connections between individual liberty and inter-national wars, considered here in Chapter 3. And, this insight works particularly well, at least here, to explain the multiple ironies attendant upon the singing of the nationalist anthem 'The Isles of Greece'.

However, these arguments begin to creak a little when they are related to systematic theories of narrative or desire, and sometimes both. Occasionally, Freud or Lacan is invoked; and more generally the idea of the 'transitional object' from developmental psychology is used to understand what Byron is doing with fantasy. In the case of the Haidée episode Susan Winter's idea of a narrative modelled on 'female' experience is marshalled to explain Byron's narrative strategies here, and throughout the poem, and, in some sense to rescue him from the charge of misogyny (although Catherine II's role is explored, little is made of references to women as inherently dangerous here). The strain is apparent in the admission that Donelan 'employ[s]' only 'what [he] can of this paradigm' (p. 84), and in the rhetorical question 'Did Byron understand nursing the way that Winnett does ...?' Surely, the unspoken answer to this is simply no he didn't.

This is not to throw cold water on some interesting speculation, particularly in the final chapter, which, although sitting rather oddly with the whole, argues convincingly for Byron as a 'transnational poet' keenly aware of the ways in which constructs of gender and nation became interdependent as part of a wider imperial project. However, Donelan does tend to suggest a Byron who can all too easily embrace a kind of 'transcendent feminine'. Thus, Haidée is still seen as the 'most pure and valuable' aspect of society (p. 89); and, later, whilst recognizing the ambivalences of the Juan's harem adventure, Dudù, its 'erotic heroine', is seen as an example of 'empowerment by negation', and of 'the unselfconscious that precedes entry into the symbolic order' (p. 101). Yet, following Kristeva, we might, equally, see such a mysterious woman as the most enduring of male fantasies.

Paul Wright
Trinity College, Carmarthen

Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey, and Hazlitt. Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999. Pp. 250. £47.50. ISBN 0 333 68325 0.

Richard C. Sha, *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. Pp. 288. £42.75. ISBN 0 8122 3420 0.

Tim Fulford's latest book sets out to define Romantic masculinity from a distinctly political perspective; here 'masculinity' becomes synonymous with power and authority, especially that exercised in the quasi-political arena. His readings of Coleridge et. al. are mainly rendered through an understanding of Burke as a kind of

founding father of the Romantic political consciousness. Consequently, while the book offers a multiplicity of readings of canonical figures, it seems less about masculinity as a social construct, about masculinity as a kind of social identity, than about the ways in which certain male authors present themselves on the political stage, whether publicly, as in Cobbett, or more privately, as in Coleridge. While this can be a fruitful approach, it does mean that overall the book seems to hang on to 'gender' as a kind of verbal tag rather than a fully theorized critical position. Fulford arranges his chapters around specific political events such as the trial of Queen Caroline. His treatments of history are intelligent and informed; clearly he has assimilated a vast amount of factual information, and not just about history: his understandings of the male writers, especially Coleridge, attest to the large amount of reading and writing he has done on them in the past. His use of the work of other critics is uneven: some are graciously deferred to, but others -- especially those who have done extensive work on the women writers of the period -- are more harshly treated (indeed, sometimes a bit casually treated: in the text, notes, and Index, Stuart Curran has become 'K. Curran'!). Fulford complains of a lack of 'nuance' in their discussions of gender, by which he seems to mean 'masculinity': even as some critics of women's writing conflate gender with femininity, so too Fulford seems to distinguish gender from femininity. Both approaches, however, fail to recognize that 'gender' is itself an inclusive and socially-based term. It is hard to see how Fulford's discussion of the ways in which male Romantic-period writers 'revise' masculinity is that different from other critics' analyses of the modifications of femininity undertaken by female writers. This extends into his style of criticism. Even as Coleridge and the rest are presented as modifying prevailing constructions of masculinity, in the end they all seem to be settling for a version that emphasizes power, authority, and hierarchy. Indeed, even Fulford's own discussion of Mary Robinson relegates her to the status of corollary to Coleridge rather than an important writer in her own right. While Fulford has made it clear in his opening pages that he is not going to 'offer ... a survey of women writers' renegotiation of gender roles' (p.17), one would expect that in discussing Robinson, or Wollstonecraft for that matter, the book might take up their presentations of masculinity as seriously as it does their male counterparts. Instead, the women negotiate femininity, the men masculinity. Gender division is strictly maintained.

However, Romanticism and Masculinity is, nonetheless, an accomplishment. Its own authority resides in its powerful presentation of its chosen authors, and Fulford's obvious knowledge of and respect for their works. It effectively contributes to the debate on gender, and its points, while they did not always convince me, certainly made me think and re-examine my own approaches to 'Romantic masculinity'. Perhaps this is what we really need in books on Romanticism and gender; since there are unlikely to be 'answers', since gender itself is an inherently untrustworthy masquerade, and Romantic-period authors notoriously skilled at feinting, a book that sparks disagreement may in the end be a more useful critical tool.

Richard Sha's book on the sketch opens up a new area of critique. While the Romantic 'fragment' has been investigated and reappraised for years, the sketch has, by and large, escaped critical notice, unless the author was, for instance, Blake. Sha avoids treading old ground by mentioning but not actually discussing Blake, and thereby frees himself to introduce and analyse less well-known instances of the sketch. When, for instance, I competed with an unknown scholar in the British

Library a few years ago for its copy of Ann Batten Cristall's *Poetical Sketches*, I only felt some surprise that another reader wanted it. Reading Sha's serious and thoughtful treatment of the poems in his book, I'm glad he got there before me.

Sha's style is disarming and fluent. He skilfully leads his readers into unfamiliar territory and uncovers its depths. Each chapter contains a wealth of information not only about its primary concern but also, in the copious notes, about other corollary interests. The amount of research the book contains is admirable: Sha has obviously spent a great amount of time in libraries and archives to the benefit of his study. The result is that his reader trusts his judgement and finds his thesis persuasive: that the sketch can stand as a 'vehicle for exploring the salutary and therapeutic uses of Romantic delusions' and that it exemplifies 'the artful rhetoric of denied rhetoricity' (p. 3). In its different transmutations, the sketch functions as a marker of 'true' femininity, of masterful masculinity, and of enforced social mores. Sha's individual chapters follow a path that sees the sketch as visual and verbal, as 'multiple' rather than 'a narrowly defined art form' (p.18).

Chapter One shows how the visual sketch contributed to the development of a sense of nation and how its varying status – was it respectable, the preliminary work of serious artists? Or the mark of the amateur? – operated as a metonymy for the state of the nation. How the visual sketch educated its viewers reflected education itself, and social considerations of who was fit to be educated. Chapters Two, Three and Four focus on how the sketch, both visual and written, enacts and complicates certain aspects of femininity: it exemplified feminine indecision and haste, it could be used to signal women's own 'perversions' of gender ideology (an especially interesting chapter and an important addition to the debate on Romantic gender constructions), and it functioned as a symbol of the female body and woman's lack of control in the courtship process. All three chapters are intelligent and perceptive and offer useful and varied readings of conduct books, drawing manuals, and authors such as Helen Maria Williams, Cristall, Mary Mitford, and other, more anonymous 'Ladies'.

Chapter Five returns to the traditional canon and investigates Wordsworth's and Byron's versions of the sketch: *Descriptive Sketches* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are re-presented as countering the masculine impulse to 'monumentalise'.

Wordsworth and Byron 'exploit the binary opposition' between the lively sketch and the lifeless monument (pp.163 *passim*).

Throughout *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* the reader encounters new and convincing readings of texts. The sketch becomes another aspect of Romanticism that, partly because of its traditional alliance with women, has been unwisely neglected. By giving serious treatment to a form of writing and visualizing that itself invites ephemerality, Sha has expanded the limits of genre within Romantic-period artistic production, and challenged scholars to reciprocate.

Jacqueline M. Labbe
University of Warwick

Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. 312. £45. ISBN 0 19 818472 7.

In this interesting and sometimes controversial study, Robert Mighall offers a challenge -- and a very useful corrective -- to the present emphasis on psychology in criticism of the Gothic. Mighall rejects the assumption that 'the Gothic finds its coherence, centre, or essence in "psychology"' (p. xiv) and instead focuses on the

historical, geographical, environmental, and discursive factors which he believes are usually negated or explained away by psychological studies. His main argument is that the Gothic, both at the time of its emergence and throughout its development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'testifies to a concern with the historical past, and adopts a number of rhetorical and textual strategies to locate the past and represent its perceived iniquities, terrors, and survivals' (p. xiv).

After establishing the historical and rhetorical attitudes of early Gothic in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 he considers works by Dickens and Reynolds to demonstrate how elements of the early novels are then 'transported' into new contexts, establishing an 'Urban Gothic' landscape. The discussion of slums and smells is excellent, and convincingly shows how 'stench could itself become a Gothic property' (p. 66). I found Mighall at his very best in dealing with such specific details as this. Other chapters deal with such topics as ancestral curses and atavism, demonstrating how and why the body became the locus of Gothic horror later in the century. This study is particularly invaluable for its penetrating analyses of non-literary 'historical' discourses, including the clinical texts on self-abuse which in Chapter 5 are associated with the characteristic Gothic trope of the 'unspeakable', and the psychiatric and sexological discourses which are discussed in Chapter 6 in the context of vampirism. There is already a significant body of critical work on the ways in which Dracula interacts with Victorian science, but Mighall has much to add as he demonstrates how psychiatric discourse appropriated material from folklore/fiction in order to help explain moral monstrosity and how fiction, specifically Stoker's Dracula, then reversed this tendency in a further appropriation. One of the most interesting chapters is the Postscript, where Mighall returns to the question of the critical consensus on the use of the psychological to explain the Gothic. Reading the psychological critics themselves, he convincingly shows the naivete of a psychological approach which remains unaware of -- or ignores -- the historicity of its own position. As Mighall reveals, 'Psychoanalytic criticism applies an updated version of Henry Maudsley, mediated through Freud via Darwin' (p. 261), but the criticism suppresses the historical contexts and processes, transforms rhetoric into psychological 'essence', and enforces a difference between us and the Victorians while suppressing crucial similarities. These similarities are most clearly pointed out in Mighall's final perceptive -- and often entertaining -- analysis of modern critical commentary on the erotic in Dracula, and his subsequent conclusions about how we have read and constructed the Victorians themselves. As Mighall argues, our desire to fashion the vampire in our own image, to make it conform to our meanings, is really our reluctance to recognize our true affinity with his Victorian antagonists. The critical narratives we have produced around Dracula, which promote the myth of Victorian repression/oppression and vampiric subversion, are in themselves Gothic, Mighall believes, and 'like all Gothic myths serve to enforce the respective culture's sense of its own modernity' (p. 285).

As Mighall rightly warns at the start, the reader might be puzzled by some of the works he chooses to discuss as 'Gothic' -- and by his decision to exclude others: certainly, I was not expecting quite such an emphasis on Dickens. For this study, however, Gothic is a 'mode' and not a genre, and the principal defining feature of the Gothic mode is its attitude to the past and its legacies. This means that, for Mighall, the Gothic element of Stoker's Dracula derives less from its concern with the supernatural, than from the fact the vampire is four hundred years old and out of place in Victorian London. Similarly, because Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is obsessed with legacies, vestiges, and curses, it has far more claim to be considered 'Gothic',

according to Mighall, than Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which he sees as primarily a philosophical novel and more concerned with the future than the past. While willing to accept that Mighall's historicist account might indeed, as he claims, enable a more precise definition of a rather vague term which too often serves as little more than a synonym for the "fearful", I was not always convinced that 'Gothic' was the term in question, remaining a little uneasy about the general argument even while being convinced by the specifics of the discussion. By the end, however, I think I was convinced: it is Gothic ... but not as we know it.

Glennis Byron
University of Stirling

James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre, and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. 205 pages. Price: £35 (\$54.95). ISBN 0 521 64099 7.

James Watt's study opens by stating the Gothic to be a 'distinctly heterogeneous' genre (p. 1), a body of fiction mistakenly characterized in modern critical writing as coherent and homogeneous. As summarized in the book's blurb, Watt 'takes issue with received accounts of the genre as a stable and continuous tradition,' showing Gothic to have been 'characterised at times by antagonistic relations between various writers and works'. Concerned less with revising the Gothic canon than with revising our sense of its central figures, his survey of the genre devotes three of its four main chapters to Horace Walpole, Matthew Lewis, and Ann Radcliffe, the final chapter on Walter Scott serving as a kind of epilogue for both the book and the genre.

Given Watt's title and the claims of generic diversity that dominate his introduction, this traditional assemblage of writers is somewhat surprising. One wonders, for example, why any book seeking to contest received accounts of Gothic fiction would choose to begin with a chapter on Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto* -- particularly one whose Introduction takes issue precisely with such accounts of Gothic's origins. Similar questions recur when the chapter on Walpole is followed, predictably, by one on Clara Reeve, and continue when, at the opening of the succeeding chapter on Lewis and German literature, we see, in a nice transition, Reeve voice her desire to rid the world of all German literature by burning it. Lewis's subversive Gothic is then in turn opposed to Radcliffe's more respectable version, whose balancing of sensation with more respectable aesthetic discourses finally yields to Scott's messier, piecemeal manipulations of genre and authorship.

It is, on the whole, a seamless narrative; Gothic may not be a homogeneous tradition here, but it is mapped with such an authoritative air that one is left with an impression of continuity, linearity, and, however unintentionally, stability. If political and economic diversity exists within Gothic, it is a diversity with which Romanticists will be comfortable, brought about by familiar concerns over French politics, German dramas, rising literacy rates, and conspicuous female consumption. The book, therefore, ostentatiously argues for the Gothic's generic hybridity while presenting a familiar Walpole-to-Scott, 1764-to-1832, narrative of its origins and development. Discounting the Gothic's strong presence on the stage and in poetry -- and therefore its tendency to operate as an aesthetic crossing the genres -- Watt treats it almost exclusively as a type of fiction, largely because his arguments are directed against 'received accounts' of Gothic rather than with the issues of genre raised by it. Where Watt works to destabilize this overarching narrative his book is strongest. His

consistent treatment of individual authors in each chapter, furthermore, suggests a kind of methodology even in the second half of the book when the arguments about generic hybridity all but vanish. In each chapter, Watt focuses upon a central Gothic writer and the fictional tradition s/he inspired, only then to call into question reductive critical generalizations made about that same writer. The approach proves most fruitful in the chapter entitled 'The Loyalist Gothic Romance,' where Watt's wide reading in primary sources enables him to place Clara Reeve at the center of a counter-revolutionary strain of fiction, coined in the aftermath of the American Revolution. Other chapters also strive to make local revisions in literary history, arguing for *The Castle of Otranto's* status as licensed, aristocratic ruse rather than manifesto, and presenting Radcliffe as reviewer-created, pristine exception to Gothic's impurities. The arguments regarding the atypicality of Matthew Lewis are more shaky, especially when one considers that the grudging list of Lewis's imitators provided at the chapter's end – 'Dacre, Hogg, Maturin, and the Shelleys' (p. 101) -- could easily be extended to include names like Baillie, Beckford, Brockden Brown, Brönte, and Byron.

Given Watt's contention that previous critics have ignored the diversity of Gothic writing and forms, his refusal to engage with recent critical writing on these very issues is troubling. While sporting an impressive bibliography, the book relies upon unsubstantiated assertions about 'received accounts' rather than engaging with individual critics -- even when their ideas directly relate to the argument at hand, as with Watt's relegation of E. J. Clery and Jerrold Hogle to inconsequential footnotes in the chapter on Walpole. The absence of Robert Miles's seminal *Gothic Writing* (Manchester UP, 1993) from Watt's Introduction is equally striking, particularly since Miles's study argues for the very ideas of heterogeneity and diversity Watt claims to be his own. The decision not to engage in any substantial way with recent scholarship -- that wealth of work published since David Punter's *Literature of Terror* (Longman, 1980) -- therefore seems at best a missed opportunity. Still, the book's concise historical narrative will prove valuable to any student of the Gothic wishing for a distilled account of material otherwise scattered across multiple critical sources. Considering its impressive archival work, however, Watt's study could easily have contested (and extended) these critical conversations with substantial contributions of its own.

Michael Gamer
University of Pennsylvania

Margaret Russett, *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission*. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism (25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xiv + 296. £37.50 (\$59.95). ISBN 0 521 57236 3.

Margaret Russett's 'poststructuralist biography' of Thomas De Quincey focuses on the relationship between the minor author and what she terms 'the larger cultural project of canon-formation' (p. 10). Drawing her theoretical paradigms from John Guillory's *Cultural Capital* (U. of Chicago Press, 1993), Russett argues that this relationship is essentially formative, that the minor author is a vehicle of transmission who effectively 'articulates the major canon' (pp. 5-6, 231). De Quincey's journalistic career is read as an exemplary instance of this canon-forming process. More specifically, Russett examines De Quincey's fraught relationship with Wordsworth in order to 'illuminate aspects of the relationship between literary transmission and the assignment of canonical structure' (p. 8). Starting from the assumption that De

Quincey staked his 'highest pretensions to literary fame' on an avant-garde recognition of Wordsworth's genius, Russett presents the individual moments of the Opium-Eater's (personal and literary) engagement with his idol as the working through of particular 'theoretical problem[s]' in the dynamics of canon-formation (pp. 10, 28). As the self-professed, journalistic 'father' of Wordsworth's literary posterity, Russett locates De Quincey 'at a historical crux whose symptom, minority, is inextricable from our received narratives of greatness' (p. 2).

Russett's account of De Quincey's teenage enthusiasm for Wordsworth sets the nascent Opium-Eater's early letters to his idol alongside the Lyrical Ballads, arguing that De Quincey attempted to gain Wordsworth's acceptance by writing himself – albeit ambivalently – into the poet's texts. Focusing on the Romantic (and Wordsworthian) cult of childhood, Russett interprets De Quincey's autobiographical account of his own youth as an attempt to 'personify' himself as the child of 'We Are Seven', effectively establishing his minority in relation to Wordsworth's creative majority. This positionality is exemplified in De Quincey's involvement with Wordsworth's Convention of Cintra, which he saw through the presses in 1808-9. As Wordsworth's London agent, Russett argues, De Quincey adopted for the first time his self-styled role as the public mouthpiece of the Lake Poet's authorial 'power'. However the difficulties which beset the pamphlet's publication – when timely utterance was vital – meant that De Quincey soon came to personify not so much a valued assistant as the return of a 'repressed historical materiality', bodied forth anew in the 'hazards of print' (pp. 80, 86).

Russett's third chapter analyses the connection between canonical minority and early nineteenth-century periodical writing, arguing that De Quincey's 'essays on political economy theorise his magazine writing as a medium of cultural transmission', a medium which relocates value in reception rather than production. This relocation paved the way for De Quincey's appropriations of Wordsworth and Coleridge in his eponymous biographical essays, and provides the basis for Russett's reading of the Piranesi dream in the Confessions as an allegory of the fraught material transmission of authorial power. Stressing De Quincey's repeated (materialist) grounding of Wordsworth's power in popular print media, Russett affirms that 'the Romantic cult of the solitary genius misrecognizes what is in fact a corporate mode of production that the minor's 'genius for instrumentality' both underwrites and unveils' (p. 10). De Quincey's Romanticism is an informative departure from the historicist bias of recent De Quincey scholarship. However Russett's poststructuralist emphasis on the dynamics of canon-formation does tend to elide the nuances of De Quincey's engagement with Wordsworth: to an extent, she attempts to fit that engagement into a pre-conceived theoretical framework. The problem is not so much the ease with which Russett labels De Quincey a minor author (though it needs to be remembered that the Opium-Eater was a household name in his day). Rather it is her confidence in his 'unworried' minority (p. 7). Russett considers her book the 'dialectical counterpart of an influence study' (p. 8). However recent De Quincey scholarship (notably John Barrell and Charles Rzepka) has demonstrated the impossibility of reading his engagement with Wordsworth in such unambiguous terms. Russett frequently comes within a hair's breadth of De Quincey's explicit hostility to Wordsworth in the wake of the Cintra debacle, even citing his admission of 'vindictive hatred' for the poet (p. 186). But her discussion of De Quincey's journalistic 'appropriation' of Wordsworth fails to recognize the extent to which the Lake-Poet's biography is effectively and resonantly subsumed within the Opium-Eater's autobiography (and this after De Quincey had moved into Dove Cottage and tellingly felled the Wordsworths' beloved

orchard !).

Ultimately, then, De Quincey's Romanticism seems uncertain about where it stands on the question of Bloomian 'anxiety' (as it does on De Quincey's relation to historical materialism). Indeed, given the real need for a sociological and economically grounded history of 'influence' in the Romantic period, Russett's book might be viewed as to some extent a missed opportunity. Notwithstanding these caveats, however, De Quincey's Romanticism is a valuable addition to the Cambridge Studies in Romanticism Series, and provides useful insight into the Opium-Eater's journalistic career.

Cian Duffy

Magdalene College, Cambridge

Mary Jacobus. *Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999. Pp 241. £25. ISBN 0 19 818434 4.

This collection of Professor Jacobus's Clarendon lectures is a fine example of what psychoanalysis is doing in literary criticism. Jacobus, famous in feminist literary theory for asking 'is there a woman in this text', has contributed a great deal to our understanding of women in literary history, particularly 'Romantic' women. Her 1979 paper on 'The Difference of View' is a classic in applied feminist literary theory, and a prescient challenge to the paradigms of equality which had largely dominated Anglophone feminist literary studies, at least since the rejection of Freud in Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969). Psychoanalysis offers a model (or more accurately a number of models) for thinking through the implications of corporeal sexual difference for cultural production, and Jacobus is adept at teasing out those implications with reference to a deep knowledge of the literary culture of the Romantic era in particular.

Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading reflects on the intersections between literary criticism and psychoanalysis in a series of formal studies, linked by close and always interesting attention to the significant detail and historical presence of written text and writing subject. Jacobus describes the subjects of her essays here as 'mainly women, psychoanalysis, poets, Rousseau, or children' (p. 8). Rousseau's casual privileging in this description, and in the collection, marks awareness of his peculiar role in literary history, feminist theory, and their conjoining in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

This highly reflective collection of essays captures something of the vibrancy, creativity, resistances and inter-subjective exchanges occurring at the 'scene of reading'. A thoughtful introduction organizes the collection around a conscious 'attempt to unpack some of the implicit assumptions about reading, whether considered as a process, a representation, or an ideology' (pp. 8-9). Psychoanalysis, in this frame, is not only mobilized as a methodological device for reading past writings, but approached through analysis of psychoanalytic writings, so Strachey, Freud and Klein can be read for a mode of writing available in Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley. Because reading invites us into a liminal space, and involves 'concepts or unconscious phantasies of inner and outer, absence and boundaries, and the transmission of thoughts and feelings between one self (or historical period) and another', a literary critic reading psychoanalytic writing (where these 'receive their fullest elaborations') has much to offer to the understanding of concepts which 'provide the foundation for much of our thinking about subjectivity' (p. 9). Jacobus is open in her intentions: 'I try to make an implicit case for the literary and critical use

of British object relations psychoanalysis' or 'post-Kleinian thinking' (p. 9). While for this reader that case has already been found in favour, psychoanalysis is an approach to (particularly feminist) literary criticism that remains largely undigested in eighteenth-century studies.

This collection offers a compelling example of what the point of psychoanalytic literary study is, what it offers to our understanding of 'the material interventions of books', and how it can open windows onto Romantic literary subjectivities (p. 10). It also demonstrates the need for feminist intervention in the use of psychoanalytic categories. The collection falls into three sections: the first two chapters consider psychoanalytic understandings of interior space, memory and 'the ways in which we think of ourselves' in reading; chapters three and four turn toward trauma theory as a branch of psychoanalysis particularly apposite to reading colonial and Holocaust writings; and the last section of the collection returns Jacobus to her 'long-standing interest' in Romantic women writers. The latter includes a suggestive discussion of Mary Shelley's 'traumatized text (one that is cut off or dissociated from itself)', and a piece on mobilization of potential space in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796). Jacobus offers some interesting correlations between, for example, Freud's comments on telepathy and epistolary writing, between 'the peculiar use we call "reading"' and 'knowing, or loving' (p. 18), and between reading and introjection through a brilliant analysis of metaphors of orality which features one of the best literary-criticism jokes I have found (p. 32 – but you have to read the preceding 15 pages to appreciate it). In the end this collection celebrates the work of the literary critic as witness to interpenetrative exchanges between historical subjects through the mediation of reading, and between books through the mediation of historical subjects: 'When the barriers come down, books are us. Which isn't to say that we are books, although we may sometimes think so' (p. 18).

Ashley Tauchert
University of Exeter

Steve Clark and David Worrall (eds.), *Blake in the Nineties*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press; New York: St Martin's, 1999. Pp. xiii + 240. £42.50. ISBN 0 333 68160 6.

This is the second collection of Blake studies edited by Steve Clarke and David Worrall to emerge out of Strawberry Hill. *Historicizing Blake* (Macmillan, 1994) was a sharp challenge to post-structural and reader-response oriented theoretical approaches that dominated some areas of Blake criticism in the eighties. Although *Blake in the Nineties* is not as coherent a collection as the previous book, that is not its intention. Rather it is a snapshot of a range of recent critical approaches and a (selective) who's who of Blake critics. What is clear is how important historicist and cultural materialist approaches have become in Blake studies, in particular with renewed attention to bibliography. As the editors remark, the '1990s has witnessed a curious mutation of deconstruction into a fastidious bibliographical ultra-empiricism'. (p.1)

The significance of bibliography to an artist and writer whose texts are nearly always unique editions has been understood at least since G. E. Bentley's *Blake Books*: it is entirely fitting, therefore, that *Blake in the Nineties* opens with two of the three pillars of Blake studies in the US, Robert Essick and Joseph Viscomi (Morris Eaves an absent Lepidus). In 'Blake and the Production of Meaning', Essick demonstrates how representation of Blake texts affects our reception of them, and how his experience of Copy C of Jerusalem indicates that Blake's artistic theory, defining art's genius by the

clarity of its bounding line, is undermined by a tendency towards stippled tonal engraving. Viscomi's contribution, on Swedenborg and printmaking, continues the approach outlined in *Blake and the Idea of the Book* and is the third part of a trilogy of essays on *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, but is less convincing than the lecture he delivered at the 1994 Strawberry Hill conference from whence this book originates. The most important detail, that the Swedenborg material in the *Marriage* was originally developed as a separate pamphlet, has been outlined elsewhere in greater detail and is merely repeated here as an introduction to Viscomi's interpretation of Blake's motif of the cave.

The *Marriage* figures again in another essay concerned with the matter of books: Edward Larrissy's 'Spectral Imposition and Visionary Imposition: Printing and Repetition in Blake' explores the history of imposition as practice of printing and metaphor for Blake's method of argument in the *Marriage*. It shares some of those post-structuralist concerns first expressed in his 1985 book on Blake, but its grounding in eighteenth-century etymology adds greater crispness to his argument that repetition, the fallen condition of the world, may also be an imaginative moment of redemption.

The two editors show themselves in fine fettle. David Worrall sketches out some minute particulars of the radical background of the 1790s explored so vividly in his book *Radical Culture* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), avoiding the common tendency to over-extend Blake's influence and instead carefully demonstrating 'Blake's proximity to the artisan public sphere of discourse in 1790s London; no more, no less.' (p.207) The importance of this often poorly-understood context is that it demonstrates how much of Blake's writing and art was contemporary in its concerns, shifting with the debates of the 1790s. Steve Clark, on the other hand, argues that one grand figure of the eighteenth century should not be forgotten and that Blake paid 'continuous attention' to Locke. Looking past the cliché of Locke as mere inscriber of the tabula rasa, Clarke finds much that Blake could admire (or at least engage with) in the figure of this 'successful revolutionary' and provocatively suggests that 'it is clearly Blake, rather than Reynolds, whose ethic of "Mental Fight"... is heir to Locke's iconoclastic energy'. (p.140)

Of the other chapters included here, Angela Esterhammer examines *Urizen* in the light of Austin's speech act theory, Nelson Hilton re-contextualizes *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience* within the framework of eighteenth-century hymnody, and Stephen Behrendt considers the often problematic relation between word and image as a process of illumination. Michael Ferber provides a very thoughtful account of Blake's pacifism, and the problem of the 'Great War' for such a humane poet. The only really disappointing essay is Marsha Schuchard's 'Blake and the Grand Masters', which is frankly confusing with regard to some of its assertions, for example how the author of *The Rights of Man* is to be numbered among mystical rather than deistic Masons.

The book ends, however, with a pure gem, Keri Davies's 'Mrs Bliss: A Blake Collector of 1794', which traces the role of Rebekah Bliss both as a collector of rare illuminated books and as a member of 'a rather different kind of dissenting community from that customarily associated with Blake' (p. 226). His account of the homosocial domestic sphere that Rebekah Bliss created with her two female companions is reminiscent of Bentley at his best, an example of how the apparently dry and unpromising stuff of book collecting can illuminate fascinating social backgrounds, revealing 'an immense world of delight, clos'd by [our] senses five'.

Jason Whittaker
Falmouth College of Art

Paul Bénichou, *The Consecration of the Writer, 1750-1830 (Le Sacre de l'écrivain)*, trans. Mark K Jensen, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Pp. 454. Hb £43.50 pb £16.95. ISBN 0 8032 1291 7; (hb), 0 8032 6152 7 (pb).

Timothy Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and post-Romantic writing*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1997. Pp. 312. Hb £45, pb £14.99. ISBN 0 7190 5064 2; (hb), 0 7190 5983 6 (pb).

In a short preface to this translation, Mark Jensen claims that Bénichou's book, far from being merely 'a specialized work of literary history...belongs rather to a select group of indispensable achievements of twentieth-century literary scholarship on subjects of perennial interest, like M H Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1952) and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946)' (p xiii). Jensen's comparisons certainly convey something of the ambition and encyclopaedic scope of Bénichou's argument, in the face of which it seems curmudgeonly to suggest that the book might have been of greater use if it had taken a more detailed approach to its topic. A better comparison might be *Natural Supernaturalism*, since Bénichou, like Abrams, obviously regards one of the main purposes of his book as to intervene in a contemporary cultural debate. Unfortunately, this is also a factor which tends to limit the interest of the book for an anglophone reader, in that it leads Bénichou to organize his historical account of French Romanticism in terms of the emergence of the social category of 'the intellectual', two phenomena which Bénichou sees as being intimately linked.

Described in these terms, Bénichou's project may sound as if it resonates with the recent critical emphasis on the historical dimensions of writing practice exemplified by books such as James Chandler's *England in 1819* or Clifford Siskin's *The Work of Writing*. This critical trend may well be what led Mark Jensen to undertake his serviceable, if at times not very elegant, translation. The French context in which Bénichou is writing, however, leads him to take for granted the contemporary existence of intellectuals as a class, rather than examine the institutions and social relationships that make the life of intellectuals possible. In fact, Bénichou sees much of the point of his argument as lying in the assertion of the autonomy of intellectuals as class, as opposed to socially determinist explanations of a sociological or a Marxist type. Romanticism for him essentially consists in this autonomy of the intellectual, denial of which makes understanding of the literary movement impossible. He reiterates this claim at several key points in the book; for example, in some 'Final Reflections' he argues that 'to imagine thought -- the place of ideas and values, as they manifest themselves in literary works -- to be entirely dependent on the infrastructural and especially economic forces that are alien to it is to render it superfluous and to renounce any understanding of its role', and comes to the conclusion that 'one can really inquire about the relation that links works of the mind to the social substratum only if one first presupposes what can be called the mind or spirit acting according to its peculiar nature, which is to lay down laws... concerning values that are irreducible to facts and that are universal' (p. 333). This quasi-Hegelian emphasis on the universal nature of literary values would seem to make Bénichou's position much closer to that of an old-fashioned historian of ideas such as Isaiah Berlin, rather than a modern new historicist critic.

The teleological nature of Bénichou's historical narrative is symptomatic of this

universalism: to a modern critic his mode of presentation seems overly synthetic, with little attention being paid to significant disagreements and disputes which have the potential to illuminate his argument. Since, for example, Bénichou is arguing for a version of the 'secularization hypothesis', where the status of writers becomes elevated to that of a 'spiritual power' which replaces that of the Church, one might have expected some treatment of theological debates in the early nineteenth century (obviously relevant to the career of Alfred de Vigny, at least). Bénichou, however, is content with stating the fact of conflict with 'clerics' without going into details. Similarly, Bénichou's treatment of Victor Cousin's Eclecticism (one of the most important philosophical movements in early nineteenth century France) is extremely superficial, despite the fact that the epistemological individualism of Cousin's philosophy would seem to form a part of the assertion of intellectual 'autonomy' which he is describing. Bénichou's dismissal of Eclecticism, and its important influence on French aesthetic thought, decontextualizes his insightful discussion of the changes in Hugo's literary aesthetics in a way that, sadly, seems typical of his literary analysis. Bénichou seems to be aware of the fact that Eclecticism was derived from Scottish Common Sense philosophy (he refers vaguely to the influence of 'Scottish philosophers' on p. 173, without providing any references), and of the fact that this influence links Cousin and Madame de Staël (he talks of Staël's 'spiritualism' on p. 163, a term which links her with Cousin), but seems deliberately to decide not to explore these connections, presumably because to give any explanatory role to discredited philosophical positions such as these would militate against his attempt to portray Romantic literary values as 'universal'. Bénichou's rather overt parti pris here must raise a doubt as to the reliability of his overall historical account, despite its impressive referencing.

The Theory of Inspiration is an ambitious attempt at synthesis, which ranges from Plato's Ion to Breton, Blanchot and Celan by way of Romanticism and the Enlightenment, including chapters on Wordsworth, Hölderlin and Shelley. Clark's approach is basically Derridean; he regards the persistent topos of 'inspiration' in Western culture, and associated concepts such as 'poetry' and 'enthusiasm', as symptomatic of a tension between the self-presence of speech and the absence of writing, drawing attention to the essentially oral, formulaic nature of schooling in Latin composition in Wordsworth and Shelley's time. For Clark this theoretical argument is linked with the problem of the writer's audience in the modern era: the notion of 'inspiration' becomes important for Romantic writers because it represents a fantasy of self-validation in which the writer is immediately present to an ideal self who, Clark argues, is a phantasmatic substitute for the absent reader. Although Clark doesn't explicitly refer to Lacan, he does comment that the original version of an early chapter was written from a Lacanian perspective, and Clark's project of investigating the psychic structure of signification in modernity seems to be a fundamentally Lacanian one (an impression which the attention he pays to Breton's surrealism seems to bear out).

Despite his theoretical references, Clark does a largely successful job of avoiding an unduly allusive mode of writing, with the result that his book belongs to the comparatively small class of theoretically influenced writing that could safely be recommended to undergraduates curious to find out about literary theory (perhaps this is also a comparatively small class of undergraduates!). The book is structured as a series of essays, but the very strong unifying theme ensures overall coherence, though

possibly the somewhat inconclusive chapter on 'Nietzsche and H.D.' and the rather stronger chapter on Octavio Paz's *Renga* could have been omitted without damaging the book's argument.

Clark's main thesis with regard to Romanticism is that Romantic writers' ambitions for and anxieties about the social effectiveness of their writing lead to the presence of what he calls a 'fantasy crowd' in their poetry and poetics. Clark illustrates this by a very effective reading of *The Prelude* centred on the Snowdon episode of Book 13, in which he interprets Wordsworth's vision of the clouds stretched out below him as a displaced version of an orator's view of the crowd he is addressing; Clark substantiates this point by referring to Wordsworth's evident interest in mass psychology at other points in *The Prelude*. In a similar way, Clark connects Hölderlin's theme of festivals with the 'utopian ideal of community' found in French Revolutionary fêtes, and draws attention to the way Shelley's descriptions of the effects of poetry in *A Defence of Poetry* systematically conflate the scene of composition with the scene of reading and so adumbrate a merging of individual subjectivities that reflects crowd psychology.

Clark's writing is at its most interesting and persuasive in those chapters, such as those on Breton and Paz, where he is addressing unusual and non-canonical texts. Elsewhere, as is perhaps inevitable with so wide-ranging a book, the literary texts under review can seem a little predictable, given the book's critical agenda: an example of this is Clark's entire omission of the Victorian period, or more seriously, in view of the fact that Clark devotes a chapter to eighteenth century ideas about enthusiasm, the way in which eighteenth century poetry is entirely ignored. It would also have been interesting to see Clark apply his argument about the 'fantasy crowd' to poems published in Wordsworth's lifetime, given that it turns on the question of how Wordsworth conceived of his reading audience.

The tendency to fall into conventional lines of argument is most evident at the points where Clark, in his arguments about English Romanticism, routinely genuflects in the direction of German Idealism, e.g. in claims such as 'Shelley's *Defence* combines conceptions of enthusiasm and contagious rhetorical power with new German ideas of the creative as the supra-rational, partly transmitted through Coleridge' (p. 146). It is hard to see what is distinctively 'German' about conceiving of creativity as supra-rational, and Clark doesn't provide any references that would support this point. Elsewhere, when he makes similar assertions about German Idealist influence on *The Prelude* (conveniently mediated through Coleridge), the sources cited are David Simpson's introduction to one of the volumes of *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism* (CUP, 1988) and James Engell's *The Creative Imagination* (Harvard UP, 1981) neither of which actually make any substantive claims about German influence on English Romanticism (with the obvious exception of Coleridge), but merely talk about 'parallels'.

This point is not just a quibble as it affects the coherence of the way Clark interleaves discussion of Wordsworth and Shelley with Hölderlin. In fact, since his focus of interest in the chapters on English Romanticism is on the rhetorical aspects of Romantic poetics, a discussion which he supports by citing British works on rhetoric in the period, these references to German Idealism are completely unnecessary and do nothing to further his argument. Even in the case of Hölderlin, Clark's own argument indicates that the poet was engaged in a critique of the German Idealism of his day, and greater attention to these kinds of disagreements might have enabled him to produce a more interesting account of the relations between English and German writers in this period than bland assertions of an unspecified 'influence'.

Gavin Budge
University of Central England

Ashton Nichols, *The Revolutionary 'I': Wordsworth and the Politics of Self-Presentation. Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. Pp. 187. £42.50. ISBN 0 333 71889 5.

Ashton Nichols's book on Wordsworth may usefully be situated in the context of the often-perceived crisis in literary studies between the interpretative pressures exerted by the canon and its head-on collision with applications of poststructuralist theory that have sought to interrogate and dismantle the institutional prerogatives of the canon. While reverential attitudinizing directed to canonical poets might seem unspeakably fustian to younger scholars yet it seems difficult to deny that the cultural legacy of Romanticism (insofar as this retains a recognizable influence on modern sensibility) appears to be most easily identified through the work and the continued influence of the canonical poets. It would be foolish indeed to set aside the scholarship of several decades at a nought yet at the same time new paths have surely to be forged in the complex intertextuality opened up through the dismantling of the canon.

Nichols's work may be seen as an attempt to steer a path through these apparently conflicting demands by retaining, in particular, Wordsworth and the *Prelude* as his focal points of discussion in the area traditionally described as Romantic autobiography, but at the same time revealing Wordsworth's autobiographical voice, his revolutionary 'I', to be rhetorically qualified and complicated by other textual versions of similar events, by other selves, such as Coleridge and Dorothy, and by the inevitable pressures of history. The Wordsworth that emerges from Nichols's critique is thus a far more ironized linguistic and political entity than that invoked by the naive view of Wordsworth, the view that takes the autobiographical ideal of stable selfhood at face value and constructs an iconic Wordsworth to match.

Although Bakhtin is explicitly evoked largely in Chapter 3, which discusses 'the Two-Part *Prelude* as Dialogic Dramatic Monologue', Nichols's theoretical bearings are mostly indebted to the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism, though also paying respects to Wittgensteinian linguistic philosophy which provides an appropriate theoretical interface with Bakhtin. Rather than embark on a search for the elusive 'meaning' of the *Prelude*, Nichols sets out, in Wittgensteinian problem-solving fashion to ask what the text does. This leads to the useful realization that,

The 'I' that speaks *The Prelude* is only another word that gains meaning as a function of the way it is used. In Wordsworth's case, this first-person pronoun is a complex literal and figurative expression designed to accomplish a variety of poetic, rhetorical, and biographical tasks (p. 60).

Each of Nichols's chapters attempts consequently to demonstrate in different ways, the variety of voices that enter into what Keats termed the Wordsworthian egotistical sublime.

The historiography of the French Revolution and performance theory are together conscripted in Chapter 2 in order demonstrate the way in which Wordsworth's attempts to present a unified self internalize the pressures of revolutionary France to recreate itself as a political entity. The argument is convincing in its own terms but disappointingly ends by arguing along the familiar lines of 'political retreat' for Wordsworth: that by 1798, he had disengaged himself from his political concerns in favour of 'literary and personal' considerations. This allows Nichols to suggest that

the 1805 Prelude was more concerned with satisfying Coleridge, with earning financial success, with expressing his debt to Dorothy, with appeasing the London literary establishment, and so on, than with political anxieties. The resulting turn from politics to the 'personal' and the 'literary' in subsequent chapters of the book only reinforces the ideologically-suspect view of the mature Wordsworthian self as somehow absolved from politics -- a view that historicist critics old and new have challenged strenuously in recent years.

Yet despite this caveat, there are clearly many important and useful insights to be gained from the subsequent chapters of Nichols's book. Even if the denial of politics in later chapters seems misguided, this is not to say that the personal and literary considerations explored by Nichols are not in their own way revealing of Wordsworth's multivocal complexity as an autobiographical poet. Gift-exchange theory provides the opening into a fascinating investigation of *The Prelude* as a therapeutic exercise aimed at restoring Coleridge's psychic health: a functional value clearly identified by John Stuart Mill and others who have sought in Wordsworth a healing voice for their own perceived mental crises. A further chapter on 'Dialogizing Dorothy' reads Wordsworth as providing his sister a textual version of himself that records her voice in dialogue with his, collapsing and redefining gender roles and directing itself to male and female readers alike: a subtly argued response to feminist critiques of the patriarchal Wordsworth. Nichols is careful not to overstate his case, warning of the impossibility of establishing a 'true' version of the poet, but helpfully alerting us to aspects of Wordsworth's relations with women that reveal greater complexity in his relationships than he is often credited with.

The most ambitious chapter is the last one, which traces the influence of *The Prelude* on Derek Walcott's *Another Life*. Tracing influences across two centuries and very different cultural backgrounds can be difficult to say the least, but Walcott's indebtedness to Wordsworth is fairly clear and can be traced with due heedfulness to the very different worlds inhabited by the two poets. Wordsworth's enabling power for Walcott may be glimpsed in several echoes and allusions that establish his indebtedness to Wordsworth at a literal level, but also point to a deeper level of poetic interchange whereby our own readings of both poets may be usefully compared and clarified. Yet despite arguing such a case convincingly and uncovering some of this material, it seems to me that Nichols misses many a possibility for instructive intertextual readings. A good example of such a comparison would be Nichols's quotation of Walcott's description in *Another Life* of himself as a child, placing a seashell to his ear. The child, in Walcott's version:

puts the shell's howl to his ear,
hears nothing, hears everything
that the historian cannot hear, the howls
of all the races that crossed the water,
the howls of grandfathers drowned
in that intricately swivelled Babel,
hears the fellaheen, the Madrasi, the Mandingo, the Ashanti ...

The passage is clearly an ironic reworking of the famous passage in *The Prelude* of the dreaming poet's meeting with the Arab who places a shell to his ear:

I did so
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,

A loud prophetic blast of harmony,
An ode in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge now at hand. (V [1805]: 93-99)

Unfortunately, Nichols misses the chance to collate these passages, which indicate the subtle way in which Walcott's postcolonial vision draws upon and ironizes Wordsworth's ability to extract a terrible harmony from 'an unknown tongue', not his, but somehow apprehended through a common humanity with the Arab. Yet Nichols's argument is not so much unconvincing as underdeveloped at this point. The book remains interesting and largely persuasive and does go some way towards the introduction of Wordsworthian autobiography into a dialogic mode of reading. Yet one senses that perhaps a somewhat less ambitious and more closely argued work might have been more rewarding after all.

Daniel Sanjiv Roberts
Queen's University, Belfast

Michael Wiley, *Romantic Geography: Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces. Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. Pp. 212. £42.50. ISBN 0 333 71890 9.

Wordsworth's 1813 description of a 'geographic Labourer' seated at the top of Black Comb rehearses some of his most characteristic literary preoccupations. A familiar (but unusually restrained) suggestion of disdain for the map-maker's 'books' and 'instruments' is followed by a dramatic reassertion of the inscrutability of 'Nature's processes' as darkness falls, baffling the cartographer's hubris and obscuring 'the whole surface of the out-spread map'. Michael Wiley's exploration of spatial representation in Wordsworth's verse addresses many of the issues raised by this poem, as well as the nature and status of early nineteenth-century cartography; but it is also very consciously informed by the ongoing 'turn to theory' within the discipline of geography. 'Postmodern' geography, such as that proposed by Edward Soja, has often been inspired by a desire to challenge the priority accorded to 'historical' over 'spatial' epistemologies. This might seem like an unpromising starting point for a reading of Wordsworth, given that his poetic representations of place are typically informed by an acute sense of temporality, both personal and historical. This, however, is precisely the attraction of the 'new' geography for Wiley, whose emphasis on the spatial allows him to engage critically with certain new historicist readings of Wordsworthian landscapes.

Hence, while new historicists are supposed to discover Wordsworth's reactionary tendencies in the poet's imaginative evasion of the 'external' landscape, Wiley identifies much of his canonical poetry, including 'Michael', 'Tintern Abbey', 'Home at Grasmere', and the 1805 Prelude as 'utopian' poems -- poems in which Wordsworth 'explored the possibility of configuring a utopian space which resisted and reformed the institutional landscape' (p. 4). Wordsworthian geographies can therefore be unreal -- and to that extent dehistoricized -- while also retaining the potential for ideological critique. In this respect, Wiley's argument draws extensively on Louis Marin's idea of the 'utopic' as the critical displacement of the 'dominant ideology' into a fictional landscape -- governed by 'spatial play'; a definition that proves quite broad enough to encompass much of Wordsworth's poetry, while conveniently avoiding the need for a more conventional generic or literary-historical account of the 'utopian' text. Wiley

combines this concept of the 'utopian' with the suggestive (rather than convincing) argument that, because large swathes of the non-European world remained a cartographic blank for Wordsworth and his contemporaries, he was particularly attuned to the ontological indeterminacy of the 'spatial', and hence also to the belief 'that imaginative configurations of space have potentially real, material effects' (p. 11). On this basis, Wiley traces Wordsworth's poetic development from the 'dystopian' poetry of Salisbury Plain through to the 'utopian' preoccupations of much of his major verse, on to his final, apostatic rapprochement with a 'dominant British spatial and geographical self-representation' in *The Excursion* and the *Guide to the Lakes*.

For the most part, Wiley's narrative offers more of a redescription than a reappraisal of Wordsworth's ideological trajectory. The poet's 'utopian' vision of the late 1790s is thus identified with the independent 'statesmen' of a familiar, idealized Lakeland community; his abandonment of this ideal is in turn represented as a capitulation to the institutional forces of economic and political modernity, now understood primarily in terms of spatial homogenization and 'rectilinear physical movement' (as opposed to the 'circular' rhythms of a traditional society -- the turnpike triumphing over crop rotation). Such redescription does sometimes pay dividends, although this tends to occur when Wiley is engaging most closely with existing critical debates, rather than striking out into new ground. His discussion of the 'utopian' elements in 'Tintern Abbey', for example, provides some new insights into what is now a rather oversubscribed argument on the poem's historicity. Elsewhere, however, he is less engaging. *Romantic Geography* proves neither so disarmingly diverting as Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel*, nor sufficiently theoretically sophisticated to justify its author's attempts to discuss the Wordsworthian corpus in a register drawn from such tangential sources as Sosa's *Postmodern Geographies* and Marin's *Utopics*. Wiley is commendably ambitious in his desire to 'map' Wordsworth's career from the early 1790s through to *The Excursion* and beyond. But the governing concepts of 'utopia' and 'spatial play' prove rather blunt instruments for probing the intricacies of Wordsworth's poetic and ideological development.

The reader is often left with too vague a sense of the 'institutional geography' against which Wordsworth is supposed to have rebelled in the 1790s, and to which he latterly succumbed. Wiley is, however, alert to its most obvious, and interesting, contemporary representative: Colonel William Mudge, the director of the Ordnance Survey, who accordingly makes more than one appearance in *Romantic Geography*. As Wordsworth traversed Salisbury Plain in 1793, Wiley notes, 'Mudge and his corps were working their way slowly and conspicuously across the same region' (p. 30). The progress of Mudge's surveyors provides a tantalizing counterpoint to Wordsworth's own, poetic mapping of the same area in *Salisbury Plain*. Mudge was to reappear in Wordsworth's *Guide* as an 'experienced surveyor' of the Lakes, and Wiley goes on to explore Selincourt's suggestion that he was also the inspiration for the 'geographical Labourer' in the lines written on Black Comb. These sections of the book suggest what has been lost by its author's over-commitment to the 'utopian' as the governing trope of Wordsworth's verse, and indicate the potential for a more wide-ranging, and historically sensitive, comparison between scientific and aesthetic representations of landscape during this period.

Philip J. Connell
St John's College, Cambridge

Toby R. Benis, *Romanticism on the Road: The Marginal Gains of Wordsworth's Homeless*. *Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories*. Basingstoke: Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 2000. Pp. 277. £45. ISBN 0 333 71887 9; 0 312 22302 1 (US).

Wordsworth is not the most obvious spiritual ancestor of Jack Kerouac, so the allusion in the title of Toby Benis's book might raise an eyebrow, but Benis makes a good job of showing how, in Wordsworth's poetry, the open road and its pedestrian traffic embody forms of disengagement from cultural choices that were more extreme and inhibiting than anything the Beats had to contend with. Wordsworth saw the best minds of his generation destroyed by revolution, war, ideological strife and political paranoia, and the one thing that kept him going was his conviction that, as someone with a calling to be a great poet, it was his public duty not to be dragged down with the rest. The Wordsworth who emerges in Benis's thoughtful and probing study is neither a Burkeian conservative nor a revolutionary firebrand, but rather someone habitually disposed to resist the simplistic binary logic (Tory or Radical? Patriot or traitor?) endemic to public discourse in the 1790s --or, perhaps less charitably, someone who was basically confused and indecisive at a time when sharp choices were demanded. The significance of the many homeless and displaced persons who populate Wordsworth's early poetry is precisely that they mirror the tormented ambiguities of his own situation: living on the periphery, and regarded by society as both victims and criminals, they provide the perfect resource for Wordsworth to develop a poetic stance of 'vagrant marginality' that sustained his writing for ten productive years.

Romanticism on the Road contains a lot of dense historical synopsis, and the beating of the New Historicist drum is very audible as it links one strand after another of the public discourse on vagrancy to the characters, themes, and rhetorical structures of Wordsworth's poetry. Sometimes the links between text and imputed context seem quite tenuous, as with the lengthy summary of French policy and practice towards vagrants, and the anatomy of the Swiss mercenary, incorporated in Benis's discussion of *Descriptive Sketches*; but at other times the method is genuinely illuminating. The thrust of the argument concerning the poems of 1793--that Wordsworth inclines to the flexibility of homeless existence in preference to the fixities of political conviction and commitment--sounds the keynote for much of what follows. The *Salisbury Plain* poems are set against the British government's tightening of the vagrancy laws in close concert with its clampdown on political reformers, and Benis finds Wordsworth, at a time when others suppose him to have been an ardent and outspoken friend of liberty, uncomfortable with the absolutism of Tories and radicals alike.

A chapter on the *Lyrical Ballads* deals very fully and interestingly with 'The Thorn'. It seems dubious to assume that, because representations of abandoned women have sometimes voiced the complaints of oppressed peoples, all such representations necessarily carry this significance; nevertheless, I enjoyed this reading of the poem as a political allegory in which Martha Ray's alleged infanticide is a species of treason and the village's response resembles the suspicion and hostility meted out by any small community in time of war to strangers and possible malcontents. Here the connections with Wordsworth's time in Somerset and the notorious 'Spy Nozy' incident are well made. A discussion of 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' adds little to the debate on the poem's relation to the poor laws, but finds positive virtues in its stand against political attacks on physical and intellectual mobility; while the concept of vagrancy becomes most metaphorically extended in Benis's reading of 'Tintern

Abbey', where it governs completely the 'contingent relationships' between past and present, mind and world, speaker and addressee.

The 'Suspected Persons' Act of 1802, said to have inaugurated modern criminology by identifying certain sets of character traits as signs of potential delinquency, provides the frame for lively interpretations of 'The Sailor's Wife', 'Alice Fell', and 'Beggars', poems which dramatize the difficulties of construing character and making sound moral judgements, to the extent of implicating the speaker himself in the 'web of suspicion'. In 'Resolution and Independence', too, the speaker's eventual identification with the old man he has been interrogating allows them both to escape easy categorisation. It is the final chapter on *The Prelude*, though, which seems to me the strongest. There is no space to do justice to it here, but I am persuaded by both the general curve and much of the detail of Benis's analysis, which finely charts the movement from the 'ethically equivocal' but poetically productive activities of Book 1, through the at best 'indifferent conforming' of the *Hawkshead* and *Cambridge* sections, and on to the 'signed confession' and penance which the *Revolutionary Books* amount to. An unusual gloss on the 'homeless voice of waters' on *Snowdon* in Book 13 makes an adroit conclusion to Benis's exploration of vagrancy.

I confess to one uniquely personal source of frustration with this book. Benis makes a number of gratifying allusions to my own publications, but manages, with one exception, systematically to misspell my name. If this is the book's only instance of vagrant referencing, I just wish he had chosen a different victim. An odd remark on Wordsworth's 'Northumberland accent' was the only other error I noticed.

This is not the first study of the rhetoric of vagrancy in Wordsworth's poetry: Anne Wallace, Celeste Langan, and Gary Harrison are among those scholars who have recently traversed the same ground, and Benis is at all times aware of their critical footprints. The success of *Romanticism on the Road* lies not always in totally new interpretations of very familiar poems, but in providing fresh and richly detailed contextualisations for its chosen texts. It joins rather than opens a debate, but it is a well-researched, thought-provoking, and welcome contribution to that debate.

Robin Jarvis

University of the West of England

Paul Davies, *Romanticism & Esoteric Tradition: Studies in Imagination*. New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1998. pp.208, pb \$18.95. ISBN 0 940262 88 6

As the sleeve notes of Paul Davies' book declare; 'spiritual quest is at the very heart of poetry'. It is undoubtedly the case that the spiritual impulses driving the creation of much great art, especially poetry, lie well outside and beyond the realms of conventional religion and philosophy. This is particularly so in the case of Romantic poetry, which is characterized by its exploration of the relationship between the self and the external world. Davies claims that his is one of the first books to connect the creation of poetry to the core teachings of esoteric tradition. He also asserts that the work of Romantic writers has hitherto been trivialized by a culture which ties itself to material, historical, and social issues at the expense of the spiritual. The author adds that only in the light of such esoteric spiritual traditions and 'holistic perspectives' can the poetry and thinking of the Romantics be understood as they intended. These are bold statements indeed. It might be acknowledged that an interest in the arcane, the oriental, or the occult was almost a prerequisite in order for a writer to be regarded as a Romantic. However, it is a very different thing to deny, as Davies apparently does, the influence of the post-Enlightenment Western European culture from which

Romanticism arose, and to maintain that a true perspective is attainable exclusively by adopting a mystical world view that is largely Eastern in character.

The esoteric culture examined by Davies draws upon many very different traditions from both East and West, ranging from Sufism and Taoism on the one hand to Christian Gnosticism and the alchemy of Paracelsus on the other. In Chapter 5, some interesting similarities between Romantic theories of imagination and Islamic cosmology are noted. These include an analysis, within that context, of Percy Shelley's *To a Skylark* (pp.99-102). In Chapter 7, we are on much more familiar ground, where the widely acknowledged Hermetic and alchemic influences of figures such as Jacob Böhme on the work of William Blake are assessed (p. 143-6). However, it is in his overall approach that Davies falls flat. Whilst reasonable parallels are drawn following lines of Romantic and esoteric ontological thought, no direct links are forged to bridge the yawning gap that exists between them. Broad similarities are noted time after time, but no evidence is produced to illustrate the way in which Oriental wisdom and less credible arcana exerted its supposedly fundamental influence upon all Romantic writing. Failing to build up any sort of consistent case to support his theory, Davies presents mysticism as the vital key to understanding Romantic thought by almost totally ignoring the undoubted influence exerted by European philosophy. One also gets the uneasy feeling that he is imposing the ecological world view of a certain type of late twentieth-century green politics upon people who lived in the early nineteenth century.

As for the author's style, the book is littered with the phraseology of 'cultural ecosystems' and 'sacred grammar' necessary to propound his views. Throughout his assessment of this mixture esoteric traditions (in which he quite obviously holds some significant degree of personal belief), the author also has the rather strange and irritating habit of comparing mainstream world religions such as Buddhism with secretive and arcane sects such as Rosicrucianism, as if they were to be taken equally seriously. At one point, he jointly describes those two examples as together being "a truly perennial philosophy" (pp.14-15), without providing any basis for this curious opinion.

Viewed on its own, this book might charitably be mistaken for the work of a pretentious undergraduate who has just returned from a gap year spent back-packing in Tibet. The influence of the alternative educationalist Rudolf Steiner (author of such works as *Reincarnation & Immortality* and *Arcana of the Grail Angel*) is acknowledged, and is very much in evidence. However, the sleeve notes tell us that Davies has a PhD and teaches English at the University of Ulster. Thus, perhaps a closer examination of his publisher will help to place this book in its proper context. Lindisfarne Books, along with Anthroposophic Press, who share the same address in New York, have published titles as diverse as; *Atlantis in Ireland*, *Reincarnation & Immortality*, *Clairvoyance & Consciousness*, and *Hermetic Astrology*. One cannot help but feel that in the midst of such ludicrous New-Age claptrap, we are but a few steps away from the world of crop circles, yogic flying, and alien abduction. Consequently, whilst Paul Davies' personal beliefs are his own affair, it is very difficult to accept his book as one that can be taken completely seriously as a work of academic literary criticism.

Christopher Goulding
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Iain McCalman, et al. (eds), *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic: Age British Culture 1776-1832*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. xiii + 780. £85. ISBN 0 19 812297 7.

The Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age was formally launched on a suspecting academic public at the BARS international conference held at Keele University last year. One of the most notable aspects of this launch was the later, impromptu Bar Quiz, for which the volume was used as a source of challenging questions. The Quiz was great fun, but it drew attention to the format of the second half of the Companion which contains some four hundred pages of alphabetical entries on people, events, and subjects from the period, an admirable tool for the historicist Quizmaster. Indeed McCalman's splendid entry on 'taverns and alehouses' in the Companion indicates how the popular drinking market in the Romantic period functioned as a forum for disseminating knowledge. So this historical coincidence is, perhaps, not entirely fortuitous. Where other Companions have settled for either series of essays and readings (often of canonical works), or for an encyclopaedic format, the Oxford Companion combines both, with over forty essays on key cultural ideas and moments followed by entries arranged alphabetically. This is judicious arrangement in that McCalman wants to provide a sense of the period as it was experienced, or, at least, how it was understood to be experienced, by the writers and commentators of the time with an strong awareness of the irrational, the disordered, the muddle, and the sheer variety of a society undergoing enormous social, political and cultural change. Readers of the essays of the first part can also flip to the entries in the second part to get the factual or biographical detail. It is a good arrangement.

McCalman's own work historical has an affinity with that of the French historian Robert Darnton, manifesting an interest in the popular and some of the darker or less polite aspects of culture. This is reflected in the Companion's concern with 'culture' rather than 'literature', with the period rather than 'Romanticism'. The Companion is not structured around a series of canonical and non-canonical writers and artists but, instead, is organized according to cultural events and themes. McCalman and his associate editors view the Romantic period as a time of 'cultural revisionism', taking their critical bearings from Jerome McGann's distinction between the Romantic aesthetic and the Romantic period, though going beyond McGann in historical scope and detail. The cultural materialist origins of the project are fairly clearly flagged. McCalman's introduction points out the difficulties with the term 'Romantic', so unsatisfactory it seems that one begins to wonder why there is a need to retain it as a rubric. McCalman prefers the term 'Romantic age' as it is the 'best available label, provided we understand it to signify an age of self-conscious and diverse cultural revolution that takes its name from the canonical group of writers who crystallized many of its key changes and who became ideologically ascendant in the process' (p. 4). His concern with the way the discussions of culture of the 'Romantic' age itself and the implications on how to structure a cultural history of the period is itself fascinating, as a series of contemporary, and often dissenting, commentators abandoned systematic method in favour of alphabetical organization and miscellany. This point functions as a leitmotif throughout the Companion's essays. Also in the period, the form of the 'Companion' itself emerges, a protean body of knowledge characterized by its 'reader-friendliness' and its stress on the 'possible pleasure, ease and sociability entailed in acquiring knowledge' (p. 10).

The alphabetical section of the Companion is very useful, a miscellany of generally short entries on personalities and events, ideas, etc. The canonical poets are all there,

of course, and generally receive about three columns of coverage in Part Two (Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Percy Shelley have shorter entries than that for Mary Shelley, for instance). Literary terms and ideas are, by and large, confined to this section where one will find entries on the Gothic novel, the sublime, the picturesque, orientalism, Della Cruscanism and so on, though 'Sensibility' merits an entire essay in Part One. The Companion is particularly strong on the visual arts. Part Two also has good entries on the political personalities and events of the day. Popular scientific phenomena, such as animal magnetism and phrenology are also covered. There is an entry on pornography, *avant la lettre* in this case. Radicals, prophets, millenarians and freethinkers feature prominently, with fine sections on a range of figures, such as Thomas Spence, Richard Carlile, Allen Davenport and so on. The ultra-radical mulatto, Robert Wedderburn, about whom McCalman has written at length in earlier works and who is mentioned in James Walvin 'Slavery' essay, is however absent. Travel and exploration is very well covered with entries on James Cook, Mungo Park, James Bruce, William Bligh, David Samwell (antiquarian and surgeon on Cook's final voyage), though not Samuel Hearne, John Barrow (discussed in Nicholas Thomas's excellent essay on 'Exploration'), William Edward Parry nor John Franklin. There are a number of interesting entries on architects, including Sir Robert Smirke 'probably the most successful and least inspired architect of the early nineteenth century' (p. 708).

The first part of the Companion is general and cultural in orientation, containing over forty essays of about ten pages or 5,000 words each on aspects of the period. The essays are grouped under the four headings, 'Transforming Polity and Nation', 'Reordering Social and Private Worlds', 'Culture, Consumption and the Arts' and 'Emerging Knowledges' (the section I found most interesting). These essays are informative and knowledgeable and make an excellent starting point for considering anew aspects of the period's history and culture, or for refreshing one's mind about areas one thought one once knew something about. Many of these essays restate the achievements and insights of the multi-disciplinary criticism that has dominated the field in recent years. The essays are vastly informative and the pieces on 'Design' and 'Music' take us into less familiar areas of the artistic endeavour of the period. Probably the Companion's greatest revisionary move, however, is to allot one section to 'Poetry' along with sections on 'Novels', 'Prose', 'Popular Culture', 'Theatre' 'Music', 'Prints' 'Consumerism' and so on. The Prose essay (supplied by Jon Klancher) argues for the emergence of a 'public sphere' in the period and focuses on the growth of the journals and the ways in which they structured knowledge and discourse (a strong theme in the Companion as a whole). Fiona Robertson's discussion of the novel is an excellent survey of a wide range of writers and the kinds of fiction they produced with reference to the changes in the reading habits of the growing literary audiences. Jerome McGann's essay on poetry, however, does not conform to this pattern instead presenting a discussion of some of the, by now very familiar, aesthetic disputes between the canonical Romantic poets, rather than outlining the status of poetic composition and the importance of poetic genres for the period, or indicating the range of men and women writing poetry in the period.

The Companion is a substantial achievement. Of course all academic libraries will want to purchase it, individual scholars should also get their own copy: pound or dollar per page, it is excellent value. It's never far from my own desk and over the few months I've had my copy I've made constant reference to it. It is obviously a reference book that will last and its mapping out of the culture of the period will serve

as a summary of the achievements of multi-disciplinary Romantic studies of the last two decades, as well as a setting out of the terrain for further investigation.

Peter J. Kitson
University of Dundee