

Reviews

Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews (eds), Jack Donovan, Ralph Pite, Michael Rossington, contributing eds. *The Poems of Shelley*. Longman Annotated English Poets. Vol. 2 [of 3 projected vols]. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000. Pp. 1, 875 + index. £95. 1 X 0 582 03082 X

No greater English poet has been served by more *needlessly* imperfect texts than Shelley. This long-standing wrong is now being rectified. We are living in a golden age of Shelley editorialising. Nothing remotely like it has been seen since Rossetti's and Forman's late Victorian labours. Two separate annotated editions of the complete poetry are currently in progress, one from Longman, here under review, the other from Johns Hopkins. Michael O'Neill is editing an Oxford Authors selection. All pursue, with differing editorial principles, a common end - Shelley texts as free as possible from corruptions - by a common means: meticulous scholarship. Such editorial emulousness is invariably beneficial to authors, whatever its effect on the tempers of editors, as Geoffrey Matthews once wittily remarked.

Forty years on from Matthews's dictum, I find myself both the British co-editor on the Johns Hopkins team and reviewer of this long-awaited Longman volume 2, actor and spectator in this eruption. The explosive metaphor is not arbitrarily chosen. The Longman edition is embryonically present in Matthews's 1957 essay 'A Volcano's Voice in Shelley', which brilliantly demonstrated that *Prometheus Unbound* was predicated upon typifying the process of change - geophysical, mental, political - as a volcano that slowly and inexorably builds up to its climax.

Volume 2 covers only two years (late 1817 - late 1819) but this includes the greater part of Shelley's *annus mirabilis*. Matthews is a strong posthumous presence, most evidently in topographical and meteorological notes which foreground a Shelley with a grasp on the actual. Was there ever 'a precipice/Where one vast pine hangs frozen to ruid?' ('The Two Spiri&'). It seems so, or something like one. Yet it is very much Everest's volume, sixteen years in the making, one which, his introduction explains, has been delayed as he and his contributors have assimilated the unexpectedly 'vast amount of new scholarship and commentary~ released in the 1990s, especially from Garland's edition of Shelley's notebooks. The assimilation is most evident in Everest's editing of *Prometheus*, and a very long review would be needed to do justice to the immense erudition - literary, scientific, historical, textual and overall grasp he manifests.

Volume 1 was a landmark, but with volume 2 the edition moves onto a new plane of excellence altogether. *Prometheus is the jewel* but the volume scintillates with the work of its co-contributors, Donovan, Pite and Rossington, editors of *Laon and Cythna*, *Julian and Maddalo* and *The Cenci* respectively. (Additionally,

Rossington offers the most complete account to date of facts and

problems surrounding the mysterious *Cenci* manuscript.) Of the three, it is perhaps Donovan's *Laon and Cythna* which will impact most on Shelley's accessibility; the poem's length and difficulty has in the past defeated many an undergraduate attracted by its reputation as Shelley's most feminist work. Another revelation is the little-discussed translation of the *Cyclops* of Euripides (to which Matthews's son, who also died tragically prematurely, contributed his expertise in Greek).

Annotation is incisive and acute; one never loses the sense of commentary as dialogue and debate. Pregnant with contextual, linguistic and textual information, the notes both distil one hundred and eighty years of Shelley criticism/editing and offer original perceptions. I had, for instance, never observed the (deliberate?) clash of register between 'peak~d' and 'clump' in 'The likeness of a clump of peak~d isles' (*Julian and Maddalo*, l. 79). Hobhouse's reminiscence that in 1818 Austria was believed to be deliberately hastening Venice to a watery grave adds point to the 'darker day' Shelley predicts for the city ('Euganean Hills', l. 117). Everest's note on Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' demonstrates what some have denied: that it could lie behind the description of the shell-borne Asia in *Prometheus*. I noticed only one place (the 'Stanzas Written in Dejection' headnote) where relevant recent scholarship appears to have been overlooked: since Stocking's 1995 *Clairmont Correspondence*, Shelley's shadowy Neapolitan lady has become more credible than the editors allow.

Everest mentions the 'reasoned disagreement' that followed volume 1. There will be more with volume 2 - the datings of 'Mazenghi' (its original title rightly restored) and *The Cyclops* for instance. There will be probings of editorial decisions - how could there not be? Take *The Cenci*. Shelley oversaw the 1819 edition, but the Italian printer did not satisfy him. He did not oversee the English 1821 Ollier edition, but gave Ollier an errata list and authority to amend 'the forms of typography~'. Ollier did so, also eliminating Shelley's dramatic 1819 suspension points. In 1988 a *different set of* corrections, in the Shelleys' hands, not sent to Ollier, surfaced (this was new to me and doubtless to others). Which base text do you choose, 1819 or 1821? The complications of *Prometheus* are even knottier. The reasonings behind each decision are laid out with clarity and fullness, never commanding anything less than respect.

We must wait until Everest and Matthews 3 for the other contents of the *Prometheus Unbound* volume (which includes 'Ode to the West Wind' and 'The Sensitive-Plant'), not to mention *Epipsychidion*, *Adonais* and 'The Triumph of Life'. On this showing, our patience will be magnificently rewarded.

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Thomas McFarland, *The Masks of Keats: The Endeavour of a Poet* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. Pp. 244. £30.
ISBN 0 19 818645 2.

One of the more intriguing things about Thomas McFarland's idiosyncratic and sporadically illuminating new

book is the index. Compiled by Nicholas Roe, the index constitutes something like a commentary on McFarland's book. Both witty and exhaustive, it includes a comprehensive listing

of standard names and topics, but also incorporates such playful entries as 'copulation, universal significance for the human journey 444-5', or Jeffrey, Francis; admires "Eve of St Mark" 39; rarely right about anything 39, or (under the subheading 'Life and Times' in the extensive 'John Keats section') 'existence, unsatisfactory 94' or (under 'Isabella') 'and pressed duck 157 (referring to McFarland's comparison between an unnamed French restaurant's 'especial delicacy' and the verbal compressions of Keats's poem), or (also in 'John Keats' under the subheading 'Imaginative and Intellectual life' and the subheading 'Poetry') 'ardour . . . and grass 212-13 and n'. Sometimes, it is true, Roe seems to go too far. Under 'The Eve of St Agnes', for example, he lists, as in despair, 'Nouns cast into verbal forms distinct from ordinary English 47', a reference to a passage by McFarland on the way that 'nouns are foregrounded by being cast into verbal forms distinct from ordinary English'. In the latter case, it seems unlikely that anyone would want to look up 'nouns cast into verbal forms distinct from ordinary English' in the index to a critical work on Keats (or a critical work on anybody for that matter) but the entry does raise interesting questions about the nature, purpose and limits of indexes.

Roe's scrupulous recording of McFarland's interests, obsessions and foibles includes a single entry for deconstruction - 'deconstruction, treats all texts as equal 39' - referring to a passage in which McFarland states that the 'contemporary critical scene' is dominated by 'the hegemony of deconstructive approaches', approaches which have 'tended to treat all texts as equal, and to bypass entirely the conception of quality'. The point is made even more categorically, in fact, in a brief passage from the Preface which Roe uncharacteristically overlooks. Here, McFarland declares that his book amounts to a rebuke to and criticism of deconstruction, which must treat all texts as equal and must entirely forego the conception of quality (p. vi). It is difficult to know whether one is supposed to be charmed or disarmed by such insouciant theorizing, but what is clear is that it can be intended to constitute a serious critical or theoretical analysis neither of deconstruction (a movement - in so far as it can be described as such - intensely concerned with questions of difference and in a certain sense with notions of evaluation), nor of the 'contemporary critical scene' (which, with regard to Keats or Romanticism more generally, can hardly be said to be hegemonically deconstructive by any stretch of the imagination). Aside from these polemical remarks, however, and sporadic engagements with Marjorie Levinson, Helen Vendler and others, McFarland is far more concerned to follow his own particular interests than to engage with contemporary critics and theorists. Indeed, what such attacks on 'deconstruction' seem intended to supply is a space in which McFarland can discriminate the 'authentic' from the 'meretricious' in Keats, with the result that the book is studded with pronouncements on 'the most miraculous creations of statement and texture that the annals of poetry have ever witnessed' (p. 210). And so on. The central argument of the book, such as it is, involves the notion that Keats is a poet of 'masks' and that there is an important distinction to be made between what McFarland calls 'The Mask of Camelot' (Keats's interest in and generic experimentation with medievalism) and 'The Mask of Hellas' (his interest in and generic experimentation with Hellenism). But what McFarland really

wants to do is to make value judgements about Keats's poetry. Predictably enough, the discriminations of aesthetic value that

McFarland makes ends up being vacuous and unarguable: at one point McFarland ponders whether *King Lear* is the 'absolute apex of Shakespeare's achievement' or whether it is *Hamlet*, whether *The Marriage of Figaro* is 'incontestably Mozart's greatest work' or whether it is *Don Giovanni*, and whether 'The Eve of St Agnes' is Keats's 'very greatest achievement' or whether that accolade should go to the odes (pp. 29-30). The interesting question here concerns not the truth of such judgements but the issue of why we would want to engage in this game in the first place. McFarland comments that much 'interpretative commentary . . . amounts to 'a kind of indeterminate droning in which the ineffable fact of quality ignominiously disappears' (p. 44). But it is this ineffability of quality which is the problem since McFarland *does* continually attempt to express it, to make it effable, and in so doing ends up with his own form of critical 'droning'. He produces a kind of feel-good criticism designed, it would seem, to make its author (and by association its reader) feel good about the ineffable quality of his own aesthetic judgements, unarguable and unargued as they are. And the fact that they cannot be argued is evinced by the tautology of the repeated assertion that Keats's poetry is the work of genius because Keats is a genius: 'The great achievement', we are told, 'can only be accounted for by the explanatory category provided by genius' (p. 183) in an explanation that lacks all explanatory force.

In the end, then, despite the occasional *aperçu*, and despite its often vigorous and bracing prose, this is a somewhat self-indulgent book, a fact which might explain its unsettling practice of repeatedly quoting substantial chunks from earlier McFarland books. And even, in a twist on this literary-critical autophagy, from earlier parts of itself. What we learn from McFarland's criticism of Keats is that for theory we should turn to *Romanticism and the Terms of Ruin* or *Originality and Imagination* and for questions of aesthetic judgement to *The Mask of Keats*. And if McFarland insists that we judge his own book on a scale of greatness in Keats criticism it would be difficult not to put *The Masks of Keats* towards the meretricious end of that minor literary-critical sub-genre.

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K.E. Smith. *An Analysis of William Blake's Early Writings and Designs to 1790*. Studies in British Literature, vol. 42. Lewiston, NY, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999. Pp. xxi + 273. £59.95. ISBN 0 7734 7922 8.

While *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is the most enduringly popular work by Blake, the earlier *Songs of Innocence* is regularly subsumed into the productions of the 1790s where its contrary state can be more readily contrasted to the revolutionary devils and Urizenic angels of the Lambeth prophecies. Although several recent critical studies of Blake have offered a cogent reading of Blake's early illuminated books such as *Innocence* and *Thel*, notably Helen Bruder's *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion* or Stanley Gardner's *The Tyger, The Lamb and the Terrible ~ ~ ~ Desert*, accounts of Blake's work in the 1780s such

as *Poetic Sketches*, *Tiriel* and *An Island in the Moon* have been rare since Margaret Lowery's 1940 *Windows of the Morning*.

Smith's aim is to remind us of the importance of Blake's early writings and designs (with the emphasis more clearly on the writings), particularly as a road to Innocence but also insofar as they demonstrate a worthy struggle with eclectic sources and artistic ambitions. As his approach is influenced by the contextual historicisms of writers such as Michael Phillips, E. P. Thompson, Joseph Visconti, David Worrall and Jon Mee, Smith observes that historicism has returned attention to the early Blake, though usually as context for the later works. 'Yet' he argues, 'it is important to bear in mind that there are more intrinsic reasons for studying the early Blake than a desire to illuminate the trajectory of the mature artist. The early work has its own authority, demands our attention to its enterprise.' (p.4) Thus Smith traces a trajectory from the democratic primitivism of *Poetical Sketches* to the borders of Experience in poems such as 'Little Girl Lost' and *Thel* via the easygoing, burlesque cynicism of *An Island* and the negative, much darker drama of *Tiriel*.

The first point to note with these discussions is how Smith returns attention to the 1770s and 1780s as a lively, even optimistic period with its own standards of democratic idealism based on American radicalism and the rather dubious opportunism of Wilkes rather than the more ferocious totalitarian battles of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic period. While Britain may have lost her colonies, the example of the Americas was evidence to radicals that 'Britain had once been, and might be again, the repository of a virtue and heroism very different from the world of Hanoverian corruption and the apparently centralizing royalism of George III and his ministers.' (p.52). For the texts themselves, Smith concentrates less on cultural politics than contemporary writers such as Henry Carey and Samuel Foote, whose popular comedies and satires were probably a more immediate influence on works such as *An Island in the Moon*.

Yet while Smith seeks to treat each of these early texts with the integrity that they deserve, the underlying argument looks ever towards *Innocence* (possibly undermining his own desire not to treat Blake's early poetry as the trajectory of the mature artist). Thus, for example, an obvious point that a foreknowledge of *An Island* and *Tiriel* indicates is that the Blake who wrote *Songs of Innocence* was no naive idealist, particularly as the first of those songs emerge from a satirical world. There is, however, something substantially different to *Songs of Innocence*: it did not simply grow out of a poetic vein mapped out by Blake in the 1780s. There was, instead, a self-conscious change in the late 1780s caused, Smith reasonably suggests, by the death of his brother as well as his reading of others such as Swedenborg and Lavater. Furthermore, Blake did not simply react to specific events of the 1780s in *Songs of Innocence*, but was also meditating on Enlightenment issues of human nature and perfectibility. Yet, as a number of critics have long observed (though rarely as thoroughly), these poems that 'Every child may joy to hear' also contrast to older Dissenting and contemporary Unitarian hymns for children, avoiding both harsh moralism and nostalgic sentimentalism.

'Drawing on easily-recognizable imagery of the peaceable kingdom, to be sure, the poetry

nevertheless confronts, challenges and contests the reader's implied vision of a fallen world - a world

in which Innocence might safely live in nostalgic memory but not as active presence in the fallen world.' (pp. 153-4). Plenty of pre-Romantics believed in a world of childhood innocence, but in a spirit more similar to those 'happy fields/ Where joy forever dwells' lamented by Satan. The road to Innocence, then, meant stripping away such sentimentality to recognise that although Innocence operates in a dangerous and evil World, it still operates.

An Analysis of William Blake~ Early Writings and Designs to 1790 is not without its problems. Smith's careful analysis tends to hold few real surprises, and the poor production of this book means that this is one text that should not be judged by its cover. As an account of the process by which Blake moves towards the Innocence of 1789, however, Smith provides considerable insight that does not swamp the expressiveness of these lucid poems. Ultimately, the power of the Songs of *Innocence* comes from the way in which they strip down the poetry in terms of simplicity and symmetry and then elaborate their significances. Unlike 'London', or other poems of Experience, the shifts in voice and tone are not ironic, undercutting the harmony, but rather reaffirm an 'affirmatory unity' whereby 'a hermeneutic of belief rather than a hermeneutic of suspicion is being elicited from us.' (p. 157)

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Arnanda Gilroy (ed.), *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775-1844. Exploring Travel. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press/St. Martin's Press, 2000. Pp. 260. pb £17.99. ISBN 0 7190 5785 X.*

This volume of carefully selected and organized essays opens with a statement by the editor on the nature of travel writing as 'perhaps the most capacious holdall, a hybrid discourse that traversed the disciplinary boundaries of politics, letter-writing, education, medicine, aesthetics, and economics' (p. 1). Such a statement announces the interdisciplinary intention of a book that, from the very beginning, places itself between the more generic, diachronic area of travel literature and the field of Romantic studies.

At the same time, this statement sets the essays in *Romantic Geographies* in a kind of productive tension with those critical approaches which have considered the 'capacious holdall' of travel literature from a mainly aesthetic point of view and thus as a branch of imaginative fiction or a special kind of writing of the self. The desire to continue in a familiar tradition whilst illuminating some less familiar areas of travel writing emerge in the introduction which is theoretically aware without being over-conscious. It clarifies the book's crucial concerns as related to the writing of geography and landscape as well as cultural issues such as the interaction between a perception of otherness and the sense of home, the presence and relevance of 'domestic' others and cultural hybridization, or the narratives of 'hot', tropical zones and the different emblematic uses of the contrast between climates and regions.

The introductory observations filter these areas of concern

through the theoretical lenses offered by Homi Bhabha's work on hybridity and Mary Louise Pratt's examination of 'transculturation', although no mention is made either of Edward Said's definition of 'imaginative geography' in *Orientalism*, or of the less familiar, but equally important, analysis of the cultural geography of maps by Christian Jacob. Deftly sketching the theoretical approaches deployed by the essays in the collection, the editor also broaches a variety of relatively under-explored topics, among which the crucial relationship between writing and mechanisms of cultural appropriation, or that between appropriation and travelling, the former intended as a hegemonic activity characteristically riven with anxieties and insecurities. It may surprise some readers to recognize contributions - those by Makdisi and Chard, in particular - which have already appeared in recent monographs by their authors. Yet even what may seem familiar material affords new and unexpected insights through the connections offered by the change of context.

The forms of appropriation set in motion by the imaginative and cultural geographies of travel are seen by the various contributors within a wide-ranging series of areas of concern. One of the most evident and developed is that related to the processes of gender- and identity-definition. In this group, Chloe Chard's well-argued essay on 'Women who Transmute into Tourist Attractions' illuminates some of the ways in which narratives of place structure tales of gender, sexuality and identity through stereotypes infiltrating the image of reality produced by geographic discourse. Gendered identity is evoked through place and its attendant meanings - in Chard's essay, the Mediterranean South and its fixed signs that are not only related to the *other* geography but powerfully reverberate on more general, and closer to home, ideas of gender. Similarly, Clare Brant's essay addresses the cultural and ethical semantics of the binary oppositions of hot and cold and, by extension, North and South, providing further illumination on the climatic logic of Romantic geographies which often wander from travel writing to literary writing of a more general kind. In Brant's examination, climate functions as a figurative and ideological lexicon that enables travellers to address discourses of 'home' and one's own nation by identifying the space of the self as opposed to that of other cultures or by unveiling the instabilities of this dichotomy. Sara Mills contributes to this thematic group with an essay on Wol Iston's journey to Scandinavia which stresses the relation between gender and the aesthetics of travel writing, the impinging of space on social relations, and the sublime as the overarching category through which landscape, geography and identity are connected. This well-developed group of essays on the geographies of gender is then complemented by a series of contributions dealing with geographies of the body and travel-writing, as well as the inscription of illness and health, such as Beth Dolan Kautz on Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy* and Jeanne Moskal's re-evaluation of Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy* in which the nurse, poet, translator, playwright and innovative guidebook author interestingly combines her medical observations with the political and cultural examination of the resonant landscape of Italy.

Not merely a stage for the setting of other plays, the imaginative geography of Romantic travel-writings is also,

and importantly, viewed by some of the contributors in its relation to writing and aesthetics. This is most visible in

Dorothy McMillan's essay on Radcliffe's usually overlooked travel books which, in this critic's fascinating and suggestive analysis, seem to hold the key for a possible explanation of Radcliffe's early abandonment of fiction. Keith Hanley then examines Wordsworth's travels as a hitherto quite neglected way to access, and focus on, the poet's textual search for a 'self-fulfilling language'. Jane Stabler's rich essay on 'Byron's digressive journey' concentrates on the poet's art of digression through his early 'travelogue' *Childe Harold I and II* and its interruptive poetics which amount to a radical critique of early nineteenth-century travel literature, operating a joint disruption of two genres then associated with English nationalism such as romance and travelogue.

Another important grouping in the collection concerns the empire and transcriptions of colonial and imperial geographies. To this section belongs Nigel Leask's essay on Francis Wilford's 'translations' of ancient Sanskrit texts on Hindu geography, an excellent example of the manipulations at work in British discourses on India and the complex texts of appropriation, connivance and resistance at work in the imperial writing of the geography of a colonial territory. The empire as geography emerges also in Jacqueline Labbe's essay on Priscilla Wakefield's *Family Tour through the British Empire* where the imperial panorama functions as the backdrop on which the author places ideas of gender, genre and education which inevitably hark back to a metropolitan geography. The idea of the writing of the East as an empty zone awaiting Western intervention directs Saree Makdisi's interpretation of the geography of empire in Shelley's *Alastor*, whereas Imperial preoccupations lead straight to national concerns in Wil Verhoeven's study on the figurations of post-Independence America by Fenimore Cooper and Gilbert Imlay, which turned the New World into a utopian landscape whose ideological validity for a British audience climaxed in the brief period before the counter-revolutionary backlash of the late 1790s. Similarly, Chris Jones's examination of Helen Maria Williams's *Letters from France* reveals the revolutionary nation as a cultural, historical and geographical landscape made up of different tensions, both a 'real' and fictional place evoked through the idioms of sensibility and Enlightenment values, an ideal *other* national structure which becomes the site for envisaging a new cultural geography for Britain.

The essays in this volume identify one fundamental aspect

of Romantic discourses of travel in the creation of a series of textual geographies that act as areas of debate, definition or reorganization of crucial concerns of Romantic culture. Moreover, the book honestly acknowledges that discourses of travel do not exhaust the subject of Romantic geographies which happen to be just as interdisciplinary and elusive as travel writing, affecting other fields of analysis such as what comparatists have called 'imagology', cartography, the discourse of national characters, anthropological and ethnological accounts, cultural and religious comparatism, economic and commercial geographies, imperial statistics, military and geopolitical writing as well as more traditionally conceived geographical accounts of other countries and continents. Admirably touching on several of these

concerns, the essays in *Romantic Geographies* indicate new possibilities of research, the new directions which may be pursued by the study of travel writing, and thus bear out the editor's observation that the book is also a first

pointer for many other possible itineraries' and for the charting of 'unfamiliar terrains', in the hope that 'exploration of areas under-represented here... will supplement - and potentially challenge - the map of Romanticism outlined in this book' (p. 12). Amanda Gilroy's carefully structured and rewarding *Romantic Geographies* is a book of maps that conceal further maps of the ever-expanding and mutable territories of Romantic culture.

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Andrew Smith, *Gothic Radicalism. Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century*. Macmillan, 2000. Pp. 188. £42.50. ISBN 0 312230427.

Like many of the most interesting books on Gothic which have emerged over the past few years, Andrew Smith's *Gothic Radicalism* eschews the psychoanalytical approach for the historicist. Psychoanalysis here becomes one of the subjects, rather than the means, of investigation. Smith's main focus is the exploration of a tradition he calls 'idealist Gothic writing'. Beginning with Mary Shelley, and ending with Stoker, he contends, a range of Gothic writing provides a critique of that idealist tradition, with its new emphasis on the mental or ideational, which finds its source in Burke and its culmination in Freud's account of the unconscious. In examining this tradition, he brings together the history of the sublime, Freudian psychoanalysis and Gothic discourse.

Smith's introduction clearly and helpfully sets out the main points of the argument and briefly considers various histories of the sublime and the uncanny with which he will take issue. In *The Female Thermometer*, for example, Smith suggests that while Terry Castle's view of the eighteenth century is 'in many ways a sophisticated and persuasive one she can only come to her conclusion about the uncanny by pushing to one side the whole question of the sublime' (p. 3). It is the sublime that Smith wants to put back into the Gothic tradition because, he argues, 'it is the one which accounts for both the emergence of the uncanny and the Gothic fascination with liminal states' (pp. 3-4).

Chapter one sets up the argument by establishing a series of interesting links between the Gothic self and the models of the self established through theories of the sublime and through psychoanalysis. Chapter two moves on to Shelley's *Frankenstein* and shows the way it challenges theories of the sublime. I found this chapter to be the least interesting, and to offer little in the way of new insights. The examination of structural similarities between Kristeva's formulation of the subject and Shelley's critique of the sublime seemed unnecessarily drawn out. Far more interesting is the analysis of the critique of the sublime offered by Shelley's 'Walter' and 'The Mortal Immortal'.

It is in the chapter on 'The Urban Sublime' that this book really takes off. Here Smith usefully brings together Wordsworth, Kant, and Poe. He demonstrates the failure of the urban to measure up to the

sense through an astute analysis of Wordsworth's responses to the city. Then, he considers a selection of Poe's detective stories to explore the ways in which they rework the Kantian sublime, using the sublime to understand urban life and mysteries in much the same way the sublime had previously been used to understand nature. He ends with a brief consideration of 'Mesmeric Revelation', where the sublime is used differently, seen as an internalized ontological force' (p. 128), and leading towards the scientific discourse, resembling the psychoanalytical, which appears near the end of the century.

One of the most interesting things about Smith's book is its implicit rewriting of the relationship of the Romantics to the Victorians. The sublime, as he demonstrates, continues to retain significance for the Victorians, even if in a new form. 'Gone is a sense of passive reverence before the numinous', Smith observes, 'and in its place we find a more rigorous, quasi-scientific investigation into its perceived sexual provenance. However, the science does not quite seem to work' (p. 174). The reading of *Dracula* in Chapter six is excellent. Yes, part of the focus is on sex again, but this is different and well worth reading. Here Smith demonstrates how the text develops a specifically sexual version of the sublime, and how the sublime becomes fully internalized, 'a troubling presence which has to be exorcised from within by "doctors of the mind" (p. 147).

Finally, the emphasis shifts from analysis of the sublime to the ways in which the Gothic 'critically reconstructs the Freudian subject' (p. 148). In Chapter seven, Smith begins by showing Freud's debt to Kant through a reading of 'The Uncanny', convincingly showing how the apparent differences in their concepts of the subject - the unified transcendental subject and the fragmented psyche - actually point to concealed similarities. Similarity revolves around the presence of the sublime in the uncanny; both representing the site of instability with respect to interpretation. This discussion sets the stage for quite a fresh and interesting reading of Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* where Smith makes some interesting links between the Jekyll/Hyde matrix and Freud's *heimlich/unheimlich*, offering some new ways of looking at the way Stevenson's text theorises the subject.

Smith concludes by adding his voice to what is becoming quite a widespread revolt against the dominance of psychoanalytical approaches to the Gothic. Such readings, he suggests, have been popular because they 'perceive something in the Gothic which seems to correspond with certain analytical models'. However, echoing a number of other recent critics, Smith asserts that to look 'at the Gothic like this is to ignore its history'; the Gothic self, he concludes, 'with all its instabilities and apparent neurosis, is in reality little more than the sublime's instabilities, personified and made flesh but for all that no more available for psychoanalysis than the sublime itself' (p. 178).

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of the sublime in its older

Romantic

Neil Chambers (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: a Selection, 1768-1820*, foreword **D. Mabberley**, intro. **H. Carter**. London: Imperial College Press, 2000. pp. 420pp. £33. ISBN 1 86094 2040.

In Joshua Reynolds' portrait, the elegant young Joseph Banks (recently returned from his circumnavigation with Captain Cook) looks us steadily in the eye; and in Thomas Phillips', the elderly, gouty and formidable President of the Royal Society, in court dress and with the mace before him, has still that enquiring gaze. Banks, 1778-1820, a wealthy landowner, formed the extraordinary ambition of devoting himself to the administration of science; and in 1778 was elected President of the Royal Society, surviving an attempt to topple him and reigning until his death nearly forty-two years later. Since the French Revolution was blamed in part on the ideology of the philosophes, science was looked at askance by Banks' fellow-landowners; and he faced the difficult task of piloting British science through more than twenty years of world war, at a time when France was the centre of excellence right across the sciences. The chief promoter of British settlement in Australia, he was also responsible for launching its wool industry; he was a Lord Lieutenant, a Privy Councillor, a Dilettante, and a member of the famous club that included Samuel Johnson and Reynolds.

As science became increasingly professional. Banks's reputation (as an 'amateur') remained low; but by the later twentieth century his achievements were seen in historical context and again appreciated. Much of this was due to the untiring efforts of Harold Carter, responsible for the project of organizing Banks's vast archive so that it could be published. This volume is one of the fruits of that labour. In particular, Banks's correspondence was enormous; and he was a lively letter-writer, whose strong character comes through his writing. We have for nearly half a century had a *Calendar* of the correspondence, which has been very useful - but to get the full texts is extremely valuable, and a splendid window into Banks's world. We find out how science was managed, and how Banks fitted it with his other activities as a central figure in what John Gascoigne calls the English Enlightenment. We meet an engaging, bluff man of unflinching curiosity.

The selection begins with letters from Cooley's *Endeavour*, complaining bitterly and vividly about being prevented from landing in Rio for fear that they were spies, and then delighting in Tahiti and New South Wales. There are further remonstrances about the lack of accommodation on offer for Cook's second voyage, from which Banks pulled out in a huff and went to Staffa and Iceland instead; but he was not a man to bear grudges for long, and we see his drafts of instructions for Constantine Phipps' polar voyage (with Nelson as a midshipman), for Menzies who botanised on Vancouver's voyage, and for Brown who accompanied Flinders's circumnavigation of Australia. He urged a correspondent to be bold and travel while young; supported Bligh in his voyages, and as Governor of the turbulent New South Wales; and tried to ensure that ships engaged in scientific exploration were exempt from warfare.

We find Banks writing a wonderfully gossipy letter to William Hamilton in Naples, and a magnificent one to Davy on the invention of his miners' safety lamp. He advises a

young protégé about the danger of card-sharps; observes a bird reasoning; comments upon portrait-painting and patronage, and on science and art in botanical illustration; and consoles unsuccessful candidates for election to the Royal Society - in one case evidently rejected because Fellows were revolted by his vivisections. Banks campaigns for the release of the geological traveller Dolomieu from Neapolitan imprisonment, and Flinders from French captivity on Mauritius. He reacts to the sad and stunning blows of the deaths of his Swedish secretaries and colleagues, Solander and Dryander.

Banks was especially concerned with applied science, and letters here concern the Royal Institution, and the Board of Agriculture - crucial in these years of bad weather, poor harvests and blockade. He managed Kew Gardens on behalf of his friend George III, as an imperial resource where exotic plants could be cultivated and dispersed to appropriate places, and where merino sheep were kept for breeding - letters here document a row with the King over the sale of some of these. We also see the stoutly patriotic Banks, raising militia in his native Lincolnshire in the face of threatened French invasion.

Banks emerges as cool and mildly anti-clerical in religion, stoical in the face of gout and what he called 'the infirmities of age'. The last letter printed was written only days before his death, thanking the Council of the Royal Society for refusing his offer to resign as President. The volume gives us a wonderful taste of the life and times of a great man, and brief biographies

or the many and varied recipients. We may hope that we shall from the archives see further volumes like Carter's edition of Banks's *Sheep and Wool Correspondence* (Natural History Museum, 1979) with its full exchanges of letters both ways - but this selection should place Banks where he belongs, at the centre of things for over half a century.

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W. M. Verhoeven and Beth Dolan Kautz (eds), *Revolutions and Watersheds: Transatlantic Dialogues 1775-1815*. Amsterdam and Atlanta GA: Rodopi, 1999. Pp. 221. hb £38.24, pb £12. ISBN 9042006471, 9042006374.

This comprehensive collection of essays gives a number of unexpected views of the Anglo-American cultural relationship at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The first contribution is by Robert Lawson-Peebles who follows the progress of the ballad *Leonore*, showing how a Scots original by Allan Ramsay was transformed by Bürger into a meditation on violence and death, after the experience of the Seven Years' War. *Leonore* then came back to England in the translations of William Taylor of Norwich and others. In its Anglicized form in the 1790s,

Lawson-Peebles concludes, it resonated with the anti-jacobin campaign of Burke, T. J. Mathias and Richard Polwhele. *Leonore* intranlation aimed to police female emotions,' for it was an interpretation of a French mode of behaviour which seemed to be infecting Britain'- undisciplined female emotion precipitating violence (p. 18). Lawson-Peebles

verdict seems unconvincing: if *Leonore* translations policed female emotion why did they include so many arousing descriptions of it? Surely the ballad's great popularity suggests that the British public enjoyed reading about female passion so long as it took place in a safely remote exotic landscape? *Leonore*, like the newly popular Gothic novel, offered escapist pleasure not versified repression. Turning from *Leonore* in England, Lawson-Peebles assesses its incorporation in Sir Walter Scott's chivalric tales and details the reception of those tales in the gender relations of the US South. Here he is on more familiar ground and writes with greater confidence, revealing the way in which influence takes on multiple shapes. A Scots Romantic ballad, he shows, helped form a code of manners on another continent, more than a hundred years later.

Kiene Brillenburg Wurth makes connections between aspects of Burke's sublime and William Bartram's famous description of the ferocious alligators of Florida. She points to Burke's interest in what cannot be seen: for him the sublime arises from obscurity, so that the object is never completely delineated and its otherness is partially preserved. Bartram, Wurth claims, puts this version of the sublime into practice when he declares that the frightful scene is beyond the power of description. This is a valuable insight, although it seems to me that Bartram's predominant mode is the picturesque and, given more space, Wurth might have discussed this.

Next are two essays about Americans in Europe rather than European ideas in America. Beth Dolan Kautz examines the observations of travellers who toured Europe to benefit their health. Her analysis usefully calibrates contemporary attitudes to mental illness, showing how self-proclaimed melancholic tourists confirmed their diagnoses by visiting madhouses and viewing their difference from the inmates. Cultural difference is also the subject of William L. Chew III's essay on American perceptions of French sexuality. Chew uncovers a mass of journals and letters in which strait-laced American Protestants comment on the sexual manners of the French with fascinated distaste.

The two most powerful pieces in the collection combine fertile interpretation with the disciplinary variety that is the collection's chief virtue. Doina Pasca Harsanyi reads the journal of the American sojourns of the Marquise de la Tour du Pin, an aristocrat in exile from the Jacobins in France. Harsanyi's sympathetic and acute reading of the journal becomes the focal point for a fascinating wider discussion of the competing understandings of the French Revolution made by different aristocratic exiles. She also shows how these understandings changed the behaviour of the aristocrats when they returned to France. This admirable essay harnesses critical tact to a delicate irony as it unravels the complicated origins of a major shift in French aristocratic ideology, manners and morals.

Laura Gribbin's contribution is equally stimulating. It investigates the reaction of Thomas Jefferson and Charles Wilson Peale to the unearthing of the fossilised bones of the mastodon. Jefferson, Gribbin shows, was unable to accept that the bones could be from an extinct animal, because extinction would undermine his vision of America as a land whose republican government would exempt it from the cycle of rise, decline and fall in which

~ empires were locked. He imagined the mastodon

roaming the unexplored Western plains, symbol and proof of American vitality, but could not resolve the contradiction that his plans for colonising those plains would bring that liberty, to an end. Peale's interpretation of the mastodon is delineated with a similar illuminating clarity. In executing, preserving and exhibiting the bones, Peale sought to unite Americans in an understanding that they could, unlike the mastodon and its extinct brethren, triumph over history and death, by the very progress of science of which the successful exhumation of the mastodon was an example.

The last section of this eclectic and varied volume takes up the issues of gender and race. Stephen Shapiro, looks at the terrible facts of slave suicide and reads Equiano's narrative in the light of it. This essay is thought-provoking but is marred by Shapiro's over-ambitious desire to make his relatively slight examples revelatory of an omission on which, he argues, virtually all Western discourse since the eighteenth century has been predicated. Here, claiming less might have persuaded more.

Shannon R. Wooden also discusses the representation of slavery - specifically in women's abolitionist verse. More restricted in scope than Shapiro's, her essay succeeds in demonstrating that the conventional tropes applied by white poets to black Africans cannot usefully be explained by a stark division between masculine and feminine abolitionism. In his essay, Stephen E Wolfe reinforces Wooden's point by analysing the different anti-slavery positions of Edmund Burke, William Godwin and S. T. Coleridge. Wolfe's most valuable contribution is his insight that, in Coleridge's 1795 lecture on the slave trade, the theory of imagination that was to prove definitive of Romanticism was first elaborated in the context of anti-slavery and anti-colonialist politics. This, Wolfe concludes correctly, 'underlines the importance of the antislavery movement to any study of Romanticism' (p. 186).

With a final essay by Amanda Gilroy that offers a nuanced reading of questions of gender and enslavement in Gilbert Imlays *The Emigrants, Revolutions and Watersheds* succeeds in mapping out several promising areas for further study of the formative role that Anglo-American dialogue played in the culture of the Romantic period.

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Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 224. £38. ISBN 0 52178208 2.

Leah Price's *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* is brilliant, bold, engaging, imaginative and occasionally eccentric. The book is a study of the relations between novels and various sorts of anthologies and abridgements that came to market prominence at nearly the same time in the eighteenth century and continued to be influential throughout the nineteenth. Price offers a strong reading of the co-dependency of the parallel forms. Instead of anthologies and abridgements acting as parasites, latching onto the rough beast 'Of the emergent novel, the history of the novel is inseparable from the history of the anthology. The analysis is put so forcefully,

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and it relies on such a small number of works, that some readers will not be able to resist searching for counterexamples that might bolster more traditional arguments about the development of the novel. Although such readers might not be completely convinced by Price's argument, the book's sharp writing and active engagement with literary and non-literary texts alike will have a more lasting impact than more ponderously exhaustive volumes.

This relatively short book (the full notes, bibliography, and index begin on page 157) consists of three chapters: 'Richardson's Economics of Scale', 'Cultures of the Commonplace', and 'George Eliot and the Production of Consumers'. The first of these examines Samuel Richardson's efforts to abridge and anthologize his prodigiously long works. At this point in the eighteenth century, Price argues, abridgments and anthologies of beauty were considered vulgar. The polite reader would, as Samuel Johnson famously recommended, read Richardson for the 'sentiment' rather than to become engrossed in the story. At the same time, of course, this idea of reading for particular moral beauties leads back to anthologizing, particularly in Richardson's own *Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, which he included with *Letters and Passages Restored* in 1751. Price looks as well at the numerous abridgements of Richardson's novels, suggesting again that the vulgar third-person summaries substituted for the tedious narrative conveyed in the novels' epistolary form become reincorporated into the very notion of novelistic narrative. (By the end of the chapter on George Eliot, the reader can predict the moments in which Price will turn the poor authors' self-defenses back upon their actual practices. All of the writers Price examines seem to do the very thing they warn against.)

The second chapter, "Cultures of the Commonplace," juxtaposes the anthologizing of Vicesimus Knox, whose *Elegant Extracts* ruled the day, with the abridgement/censorship of Shakespeare's plays by the Lambs' and Thomas Bowdler's work on Shakespeare and the composition and reception of Ann Radcliffe's novels. As Price points out, Radcliffe's books puzzled reviewers with their mixture of prose and verse and their incessant debunking of their own supernatural elements. The novels can be read as anthologies of verse—which figure as gems among the potentially vulgar narrative: 'Verse points outward from the gothic novel, breaking and braking the narrative with a kind of centrifugal force' (p. 94). Here Price is able to develop the tension between reading for the plot and extracting sentiments from a complex form that motivated much of the chapter on Richardson, and that is integral to the next chapter on Eliot.

'George Eliot and the Production of Consumers' uses the volumes of 'beauties' of Eliot edited by 'a sycophantic young Scotsman named Alexander Main' to demonstrate a fundamental internal contradiction of the novel as it attains the status of high art in the Victorian literary marketplace. Eliot despised the *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse Selected from the Works of George Eliot*, complaining that the method of extracting sayings from their context in a complex narrative results in vulgar simplification. At the same time, Eliot's style, and the artistic ambition of the high Victorian novel work towards the sententiousness that Main's collections

mass produce. Price touches on the aspects of gender and class that her analysis points to, but never in a heavy-

handed way that interferes with her energetic engagement with the literary texts that lie at the centre of each of the chapters. *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* has no time for the pompous pronouncements of traditional idolizing scholarship, and some critics might be as offended as the Richardsonian reviewer of her manuscript whom Price mocks in the first chapter. And it is true that Price places too much emphasis on the explanatory power of the anthology, claiming, for example, that reviewers borrowed the form of the anthology when including long extracts in their evaluations. Readers of eighteenth-century reviews will know that evaluation only gradually became central to reviews, and that it is just as likely that anthologies (in the modern sense) took their method from reviews. Other readers may have other quibbles, but most will find *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* delightful and thought-provoking.

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Duncan Wu (ed.), *William Hazlitt. Selected Writings*. Edited by Duncan Wu, general introduction by Tom Paulin. 9 vols. London: Picketing and Chatto, 1999. pp. cclxviii + 3012. £595. ISBN 1851963693.

William Hazlitt.. Selected Writings, edited by Duncan Wu with an introduction by Tom Paulin, runs to a handsome nine volumes and covers the period between 1805 and 1826 with a range of enabling editorial apparatus. While the value of this publication is clear for libraries that do not hold earlier Hazlitt editions, Wu's editorial introduction also demonstrates how his new edition corrects P. P. Howe's *Complete Works of William Hazlitt* of 1930, still held by many libraries. While this new selection cannot entirely supersede Howe's comprehensiveness, as Wu is quick to acknowledge, Wu shows how his own edition improves upon and corrects Howe and makes Hazlitt freshly available to a contemporary audience. Wu distinguishes his edition from that of Howe by showing firstly that Howe perpetuated the mistakes of his predecessors by failing to return to original copy-texts but rather following previously published editions of the critic's work. Wu, by contrast has returned to first editions and to Hazlitt's own manuscripts where these are available. As well as enabling Wu to present corrected versions of Hazlitt's texts, the return to manuscript also reveals interesting aspects of Hazlitt's composition methods, such as his tendency to make copious alterations at proof stage. This new edition also updates the scholarly apparatus, referring readers to current critical and editorial sources, where Howe's references are now necessarily often obsolete. Wu's edition also adds two texts to the canon: 'To the Monthly Reviewers', and a 'Punishment of Death'.

full version of 'On the

The edition opens with the early *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*; demonstrates Hazlitt's astonishing productivity during the period 1817-1820 with the subsequent critical writings which made his reputation, *Characters of Shakespeares Plays, The Round Table, Lectures on the English Poets*,

A View of the English Stage, Lectures on the English

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Literature of the Age of Elizabeth; and reprints the major works from 1821-1826, *Table Talk*, *Liber Amoris*, *The Spirit of the Age* and *The Plain Speaker*. The editorial apparatus gives a clear sense of the development of Hazlitt's work and its reception by its contemporaries, by including a survey of criticism within the covers of each volume. It is striking to note the almost unmitigated critical hostility to Hazlitt's texts, especially as his political position becomes clear in the post-war period. **This begins as early as 1817 with the mixed reception** of his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* which was received enthusiastically for its critical insight but with hostility for its politics, and continues through the *Political Essays* of 1819 which were read by some as rabble-rousing inappropriate to the middle-class audience to whom they were addressed. Reading the developing and increasingly hostile response one wonders that Hazlitt was able to write at all; but Wu makes a more sophisticated point, showing how Hazlitt's increasing status as a pariah, confirmed by the disaster of *Liber Amoris*, is in some sense a liberation enabling him to write *The Spirit of the Age* of 1825 and *The Plain Speaker* of the following year without fear or favour. Wu's detailed editorial notes make this still plainer as he follows the first edition of *The Spirit of the Age* but notes the changes made in subsequent editions in response to hostile critics.

By the time of the publication of the *Plain Speaker* Hazlitt's reputation was so damaged that the collection received little attention. And yet Tom Paulin, in his critical introduction to the edition, refers us to George Saintsbury who saw the text as the finest introduction to Hazlitt available. The disjunction between Hazlitt's contemporary reception and his posthumous reputation must be the most striking aspect of the edition.

Each volume includes a bibliography, and a 'Brief Biographical Directory of selected Personages mentioned, or referred to, by Hazlitt'. The volume containing 'A View of the English Stage' contains an invaluable 'Directory of Principal Singers, Actors and Actresses'.

Tom Paulin's general introduction to the edition follows his monograph *The Day Star of Liberty*, also published in 1998, by setting the texts in a number of cultural and literary contexts such as Unitarianism, Hazlitt's Anglo-Irish background and a range of literary influences. Paulin traces the ways in which Unitarian Dissent might be seen as 'the shaping spirit' of Hazlitt's imagination, concentrating in particular on what he calls the 'Protestant plain speaking' represented by Hazlitt's pugnacious style, his delight in argument and debate, and his commitment to liberty - a commitment rendered more interesting by his fundamental scepticism as to the human capacity for rationality. Paulin also finds in Hazlitt's coupling of the intellectual and the sensual a Unitarian influence, as well as a legacy of interest in the physical left over from his failed career as a painter. Paulin's critical introduction closes with lengthy and insightful analyses of Hazlitt's prose style in relation to a range of contextualizing texts, most notably by Shakespeare, Milton and Burke.

This is a beautifully presented edition and a fine addition to Hazlitt scholarship.

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

As the sleeve notes of Paul Davies's 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 the thinking of the Romantics be understood as they were 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 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 alchemical influences of figures such as Jacob Boehme 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 upon 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 phraseology of 'cultural ecosystems' and 'sacred grammar' necessary to propound his views. Throughout his assessment of this mixture of esoteric traditions (in which he quite obviously holds some significant degree of personal belief), the author also has a 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 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. Lindsifarne Books, along with Anthroposophic Press, who share the same address in New York, have published titles

- *Atlantis in Ireland, Reincarnation & Immortality,*

as diverse as,

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's 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.

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Nicholas M. Williams, *Ideology and Utopia in the Poetry of William Blake.* 11 illustrations. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. xviii + 250. Hb £42.50. ISBN 0 52162050 3.

Nicholas Williams's book aims to bridge the gap between social and 'aesthetic' (p.1) constructions of Blake over the last few decades by placing Blake's artistic strategies in an ideological configuration that, paradoxically, suggests that it is when Blake is 'at his most transcendent' that he is 'reacting most closely to historical pressures and social conditions' (p. xiv). Williams's name for the gesture of political and historical transcendence in Blake is 'utopia,' a term he utilises out of Karl Mannheim and Paul Ricoeur in order to designate the excess, residue or 'surplus' (p. 180) that exists in any given ideological formation, and that points in its very non-realization to the future, to possible transformation, to a so far unrealized or unachieved social and historical value. Thus, he argues,

Blake's 'strategies for change' finally rest on 'the fundamental negation of the "here" of ideology for the "nowhere" of utopia' (p.24): a nowhere that exists, for Blake, in the aesthetic labour of critical ideological transformation itself.

In order to chart the career of this aesthetic-historical Blake, Williams visits a series of key intertexts of Blakean production: Rousseau and ideologies of education in *Emile* and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Wollstonecraft and programmes for women's liberation in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Burke and models of history in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and *America, The Song of Los* and *The Four Zoas*, Paine and utopian transformation in *Rights of Man* and *Milton*, and Robert Owen's experiments in communitarian living and Jerusalem. The questions of ideological critique and utopian projection are, obviously, different in each case; but Williams's argument in the round is that Blake's images of fallenness and ideological closure are read 'correctly only when one extends them into their utopian dimension, realizing Albion's fall as a proleptic form of his resurrection, his disunity as a proleptic form of his unity' (p.27). Utopia is thus the historical leap made possible by the fissure in any given or existent ideological form.

Acknowledging that Blake and Rousseau are antagonists when it comes to the ideological value of 'Nature,' Williams at the same time sees in Rousseau's educational theory a critique of pedagogy as cultural 'transmissibility' (p.43); and it is here that for him Blake and Rousseau join forces in an implicitly utopian projection of education as a potential engine of transformation. Williams's account of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* sees that work as spanning the 'evolution from eighteenth-century political philosophy (as in Hobbes, Locke, and Smith) to nineteenth-century ideology-critique' (p.76), and Blake's own oeuvre occupies that moment of transition, too. The *Vindication*-Blake conjunction usefully sheds light on Blake's often troubling depictions of 'Female Will,' for Williams emphasizes how Female Will in Blake is an ideological sign that chimes in with Wollstonecraft's grasp of eighteenth-century woman's containment in a disempowering theatre of sexual seduction and prohibition (p.78).

juxtaposed chapters on Burke and 'models of history' (p.98), and Paine, the 'utopian moment' (p. 141) and *Milton*, emphasize Blake's opposition to Burke's conservative progressivist paradigm of history and his espousal of Paine's understanding of change in terms of 'crisis': of a 'rupture in the fabric of historical time' embodied in Paine's 'ever-present moment of consent' (p. 147), in which the populace constantly (re)authorizes its own governance, rather than receives it from the dead hand of tradition. It is in Blake's *Milton* that Williams sees dramatized the "'Moment" of revolutionary crisis' (p. 147) that produces change, and he illuminatingly links *Milton's* usage of the legendary imagined, lost history hymned in its prefatory 'Jerusalem' lyric to Benjamin's idea of a 'Nessianic' (P. 149) history that is recovered and inscribed in the present in the name of the future. What seems odd about the chapter 'is

that it does not link this idea to the specifics of Blake's
recovery
and reinscription of the (lost) figure of Milton himself, or

present a view of Blake's (re)writing of Milton
into history.

The last chapter rather uneasily marshals the

figures of Robert Owen and Jargen Habermas in an effort to present the social body of *Jerusalem* as directed towards regenerative or utopian social change; however, the ideological implications of *Jerusalem's* tumultuous textual dynamics are mostly invisible here. Yet Williams ends his study with a suggestive conclusion arguing that there is an 'aesthetics of unrepresentability' (p.219) in Blake that, like Lyotard's version of the postmodern, celebrates invention rather than tradition. *If* utopia is 'not here' (p.218), rather than here, its very unrepresentability - for Blake as for Lyotard - thus energises a future-directed search for what Lyotard, speaking of radical aesthetic experimentation, calls 'new presentations.'

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