Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. Pp. 206. £19.99. ISBN 9780748641987.

Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies, along with six other works, was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2013 as part of its Postcolonial Literary Studies series edited by David Johnson and Ania Loomba. Bohls' work is a significant publication that offers a general overview of the literature which reflects and deals with issues related to the development of the British Empire during the Romantic period.

Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies demonstrates the close relationship between British Romantic literature and the growth of empire as the author makes it clear that the influence of the empire upon the development of Romantic literature was no less significant than the impact of the French Revolution, a theme well researched since the 1950s. '[A]lthough the late 1980s and early 1990s produced much important historicist work', as Bohls argues, 'not until the very end of the twentieth century did a critical mass of scholars of Romantic literature come to see colonialism and empire as crucial parts of that matrix' (1). In other words, the empire and its relations with other worlds were clearly among the major themes of British Romantic literature – a fact that we cannot now ignore.

Bohls is an expert on travel writing who co-edited Oxford University Press' *Travel Writing 1700-1830: An Anthology* (2005) with Ian Duncan. Her five chapters thus deal with a wide range of literary genres, including novels, poems and, in particular, travel narratives. She begins Chapter 1 ('Romantic Geographies') of this book by applying her specific expertise to research the literature of the Romantic period in the context of the empire. This methodology works effectively since travellers, including both British travellers and those who came as visitors to the UK, were key witnesses to encounters between the metropole and colonies, the empire and the rest of the world in a series of contact zones. Their travel writings, both fictional and non-fictional, represent and reflect the situation of such encounters: to use Bohls' words, this 'individual experience' has 'corporate significance' (20).

In Chapter 2 ('Slavery and the Romantic Imagination'), Bohls elucidates that while Romantic Britain economically profited from slavery, the country was also greatly troubled by what was increasingly seen as exploitation. The writers selected for study in this chapter come from diverse racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds; and the texts the author has chosen to analyze include some of the best known Romantic poems, novels and narratives, including William Blake's 'The Little Black Boy' (1789), William Earle's *Obi, or, The History of Three-Fingered Jack* (1800) and Robert Wedderburn's *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824).

In Chapter 3 ('Scottish Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies'), Bohls focuses her attention on the so-called 'internal colonial' relations between England and Scotland. This issue was first discussed in Michael Hechter's seminal work, *Internal Colonialism* (1975). The discussion was importantly continued in Silke Stroh's *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (2011) and Coinneach Maclean's doctoral thesis "The 'Tourist Gaze' on Gaelic Scotland" (University of Glasgow, 2014), but the subject has yet to be widely discussed in academia. In this chapter, Bohls introduces the issue to her readers by offering convincing analyses of major Romantic writing by James Macpherson, Robert Burns, Walter Scott, James Hogg and Thomas Pringle. Although inevitably introductory in its nature, the author's inclusion of Scottish Romantic literature within the postcolonial debate greatly enriches our understanding of Scotland's status during the development of the empire.

Chapter 4 ('Romantic Orientalism') is primarily about the relationship between the East and the West as illustrated in British Romantic literature. For Romantic Britain, the Orient was not only a rich colonial site but also an indispensible stimulation to its artistic endeavours. Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), Sydney Owenson's *The Missionary* (1811) and several poems by Shelley and Byron are examined by Bohls in order to demonstrate the significant contribution of this oriental element to the creation of British Romantic literature. During this era, British attitudes towards the East became less sanguine, but, as Bohls rightly points out, the above-mentioned works often 'call Western cultural superiority into question' (141). They interrogate, rather than simply endorse the deeds of the empire.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the main focus of the Coda, 'Romantic Readers and Writers, Selves and Others'. Here, Bohls conducts a postcolonial reading of *Frankenstein*, and demonstrates the way in which *Frankenstein* reflects the condition of slavery and other racial issues prevalent during the novelist's lifetime.

Bohls' *Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies* offers highly useful material for students embarking on the study of both Romantic and postcolonial literatures. This work, I firmly believe, is also an indispensible part of the library of scholars with a serious intent on understanding the complexities of the empire from which much Romantic literature sprang.

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