

Jon Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. 322. £60. ISBN 9781107029101.

Roderick Tweedy, *The God of the Left Hemisphere: Blake, Bolte Taylor, and the Myth of Creation*. London: Karnac Books, 2013. Pp. 352. £23.89. ISBN 1780491018.

The last few decades saw first a trickle, then a torrent, of literary criticism on the topic of 'literature and science'. One likely proximate cause of interest in this topic is the fundamental restructuring of the university that has taken place in this same period: as more universities privilege STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and math), position themselves primarily as recruiting grounds for business, and focus on forms of knowledge that can be 'translated' into products outside academic discourse, faculty in disciplines and fields left in the cold by this move – for example, much of the humanities – have had to consider anew the place of their intellectual endeavors and pursuits under the broad rubric of 'arts and sciences'. 'Literary Darwinists' have concluded that literary critical methods must be disciplined by the natural sciences; others have argued, more ecumenically, that past relationships between literary and science anticipate the results of a contemporary science (e.g., Alan Richardson's *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*). Expanding on Gillian Beer's pioneering approach in *Darwin's Plots*, still others have argued that literary elements, such as narrative form or metaphor, are essential parts of the sciences, while historicizing critics have underscored the differences between past and present understandings of the relationship between the arts and sciences. Romantic literature has played an important role in all of these approaches, in large part because both the sciences and the concept of 'literature' took on their fully modern forms in the Romantic era. Klancher's *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age* and Roderick Tweedy's *The God of the Left Hemisphere: Blake, Bolte Taylor, and the Myth of Creation* both exemplify this ever-increasing interest in the history of relationships between the arts and sciences, and both take Romantic authors as their focal points, yet each also takes a new and unusual perspective on this relationship.

Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences focuses on the 'the arts and sciences' as a Romantic-era concept that Klancher describes, I think correctly, as 'an enabling framework of modern literary and cultural studies' (1), and one that displaced the earlier concept of 'the republic of letters'. Much of Klancher's book focuses on the emergence of 'arts-and-sciences institutions' (such as the Royal Institution and the British Institution) and Klancher's key insight is to connect the term 'arts and sciences' to 'institution'. There is no doubt that 'institution' was a key Romantic-era concept – it was against 'institutions', for example, that William Godwin wrote *Of Political Justice* – but Klancher encourages us to see this concept anew. He argues that the concept and practice of institution was itself instituted in the Romantic era, as part of cultural battles among groups each seeking to determine relationships among the mechanical arts, the fine arts, and the sciences. In the seven chapters of his book, Klancher emphasizes the contingency of these battles by focusing on a wide range of authors, groups, and topics, including an account of the new figure of 'the administrator' (Chap. 2); debates over a new mode of book history (Chap. 3); and Romantic-era modes of historical writing about the history of science (Chap. 5).

Although Klancher does not aim to provide a comprehensive history of his topic, his book contains a wealth of details, and will be of great interest to scholars interested in the institutionalization of 'the arts and sciences' in this period. Yet one has the nagging sense that

Klancher's primary goals – interrogating the origins of 'the arts and sciences', the power asymmetry between the two halves of that pairing, and the relationship of that asymmetry to institutions – require a more reflexive form than the one in which his account is cast. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the cultural 'field', for example, upon which Klancher relies heavily, would have been such a point for further reflection. The field-concept highlights both contingency and reciprocal relations among many actors, yet this sense of the term emerged in mid-nineteenth century physics (and was employed almost immediately by neoclassical economists as a way of instituting a 'scientific' economics) – a fact that is methodologically significant for, but not discussed in, Klancher's account. And although Klancher productively reads the Romantic-era figure of the institutional administrator through the link that Theodor Adorno noted between the concept of culture and the practice of administration ("Whoever speaks of *culture*," wrote Adorno, "speaks of *administration* as well," qtd. 51), Klancher does not pursue reflexively the implications of such a claim for the resolutely historicist and theoretically modest form of his book, which itself seems committed to 'the administrative view' of assembling, distributing, evaluating, and organizing. To put this another way, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences* is a book for academic specialists on Romantic-era literature and culture – by no means a bad thing, but a fact that remains in tension with the broader aims and potential of Klancher's book.

If *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences* is a book for specialists, Roderick Tweedy's *The God of the Left Hemisphere: Blake, Bolte Taylor and the Myth of Creation* is something else entirely. Tweedy's title seems designed to give the reader fair warning that this will be a rather unorthodox book, and the text does not disappoint that expectation. Yet as is often the case when William Blake is involved, this is ultimately a good kind of heterodoxy. The 'Bolte Taylor' of the title refers to Harvard neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor, and Tweedy's thesis, in brief, is that William Blake both anticipated and allows us to understand Bolte Taylor's neurological account of the difference between 'left hemispheric' and 'right hemispheric' approaches to the world.

Those fearful of a relatively simple symmetry between Blake and modern neuroscience may find the first four chapters (Part One of the book) concerning, for Tweedy argues there that 'the qualities and functions ascribed by Blake to "Urizen" correspond remarkably closely to the activities and programs of what modern neuroscientists identify as the "left hemisphere" of the human brain' (4). Yet even in these chapters, there is more going on than first meets the eye. Bolte Taylor, for example, is a rather singular neuroscientist, one who herself experienced a stroke and 'whose [neurological-scientific] distinctions come from [that] actual personal experience' (7). Tweedy does not seek to use purported scientific doxa to bolster his claims about Blake's *oeuvre*. Rather, he picks Bolte Taylor precisely because of her singular and unique interpretation of brain functioning, one based on her own experience of her stroke, and dedicated to the ultimately cultural-therapeutic task of releasing the brain's right hemisphere from its domination by the rationalizing and abstracting left hemisphere. The intriguing methodological result is that Blake is neither subordinated to neuroscience nor are Tweedy's claims in danger of being 'disproven' should the neuroscientific doxa shift (as it inevitably will, given the nature of the sciences).

Yet it is really in the second half of the book that Tweedy's account comes into its own. Blake now emerges not only as a medium for translating Bolte Taylor's neuroscience, but also as a lens through which Tweedy can bring together and into view a series of additional scientific and popular-scientific claims: R. E. Leakey on the prehistoric origins of inequality; S. Taylor on the peaceful pre-historic city of Catal Huyuk; D. Grossman's research, originally sponsored by the U.S. military, on the difficulty of getting average soldiers to kill an enemy combatant; R. Sheldrake and I. McGilchrist on 'the science delusion'.

It is likely obvious from this description that *The God of the Left Hemisphere* is not really literary criticism, nor does it draw upon much contemporary Blakean literary criticism (Tweedy relies most heavily on S. F. Damon's 1924 *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*), and he cites approvingly texts such as E. Tolle's *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*. Yet these facts weigh less against the book than testify to the impact of Blake that has been felt by most of his readers: Blake is, in Tweedy's account, not simply one literary author among many, about whom one must make 'responsible' critical claims, but rather a prophetic writer who asks us to reconsider fundamentally ourselves and the world in which we are living – an endeavor that, of necessity, forces us to depart from the narrow genre of literary criticism. While the result will not, I suspect, be to everyone's liking, it is hard to deny that the spirit of Blake seems truly to shine through in many places in this book.

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