

Helena Bergmann, *A Revised Reading of Mary Hays' Philosophical Novel Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796): Enlarging the Canon of the Mary Wollstonecraft Literary-Philosophical Circle*. Preface by Jacqueline Labbe. Lewiston, PA: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011. Pp. 179. PB \$49.95. ISBN 978077343948X.

Judith Thompson. *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle: The Silenced Partner*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. Pp. 313. £58. ISBN 9780230104488.

Over the last three decades, British Romanticism has undergone major revisions. Both Helena Bergmann's *A Revised Reading of Mary Hays' Philosophical Novel* and Judith Thompson's *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* attempt further rewriting: Bergmann by insisting on Hays' central place as a 'female philosopher', and Thompson by resituating Thelwall as an equal but 'silenced' partner to the Coleridge/Wordsworth line of Romantic thought.

Reading these books together is both encouraging and instructive. It is encouraging to see how enriched British Romanticism – figured as the 'Wollstonecraft [...] circle' or as famed poetic partnership – becomes when we include key figures marginalized under later reconstructions. Bergmann's interest in reinstating Hays as a feminist foremother that a contemporary might recognize stands in curious relation to Thompson's historicized and textually-oriented study of Thelwall's intercourse with Wordsworth and Coleridge. Helena Bergmann's study relies on readily available reprints of Hays' novel and letters (Broadview, Mellen), contrasting with Judith Thompson's dependence on rarified library editions (Pickering & Chatto) and archival resources.

Hays is still usually invoked in association with other late eighteenth-century women writers. Thus, Bergmann intends a real service in giving Hays and *Emma Courtney* the full benefit of the extended canvas of a monograph. The book is organized into four parts: Chapter 1 'An Educationalist out of her Time' on Hays' connection both to Unitarianism and to Wollstonecraftian proto-feminism, Chapter 2 'A Philosophy of Memoirs' focused primarily on *Emma Courtney*, Chapter 3 'Dissenting Correspondence' traces Hays' life and her place within communities of religious dissent and radical philosophy, and Chapter 4 'Parody and Proliferations' focuses on fictional responses to *Emma Courtney* both English and French. Bergmann writes that the purpose of her study is 'to rehabilitate Mary Hays' position as a writer and educational feminist' (6). She often seems to be arguing with a selective version of Hays scholarship. Referencing mostly criticism before 2003, Bergmann points for an instance of misogynist dismissiveness to J. M. Tomkins's study—from 1938. She repeats the charge that Hays' work lost its 'radicalism' after 1798 (11), conflicting with current scholarship on Hays' later works, including *Female Biography*. The bibliography lacks some cited references and references some French names incorrectly; typographical or usage errors are noticeable.

Focusing on Hays and the novel itself, Bergmann brings particularly welcome attention to Hays' interest in male interlocutors. Clearly Bergmann is interested in how women negotiate intellectual relationships that may or may not include a romantic or sexual element. She argues that both the author and her character demand (and earn) male respect and recognition on intellectual subjects, attending seriously to Hays' engagement with Helvétius as well as Godwin and to her youthful intellectualized romance with John Eccles as well as the disappointing mature one with William Frend. But while usefully situating Hays within a larger philosophical context, this approach also risks implying that Hays matters

only *because* she engaged male interlocutors. Hays' female intellectual compatriots – Wollstonecraft and Fenwick for instance – are largely absent.

Bergmann's book is unusual in reading not only Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* as a response to *Emma Courtney*, but Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* and, crossing the channel, Mme de Genlis's *La femme philosophe* and Guizot's *La chappelle d'Ayton, or Emma Courtney*. However this promising move is disappointing in execution; Bergmann takes her cue from Hamilton's caricatured Bridgetina Botherim to trace all attacks on the 'female philosopher' figure back to Emma or even Hays herself. More effective is Bergmann's use of Gérard Genette's model of hypertextual variants. In this analysis, Hays' novel is the originary hypotext, while Hamilton's satire falls into caricature as distinct from Edmund Lloyd's more playful novel, which falls under parody. Both *Edmund Oliver* and *La femme Philosophe* are identified as 'transposed' versions of Hays' characters, but Genlis's *Femme Philosophe* is also tagged as 'forgery' for unsympathetic transposition. *A Revised Reading* misses the opportunity to consider how Hays' Augustus and Montague and Lloyd's Edmund might typify the 'man of feeling' or perhaps Romantic masculinity in contrast with the self-controlled female philosopher.

In discussing the novel, twentieth-century mostly French theorists are referenced (Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray, Winnicott), but in glancing ways that don't build to a sustained model. A kind of ahistorical approach is evident throughout, despite references to Helvétius, Godwin, Rousseau, Frend, and Hays' biography. There are advantages to ahistorical theoretical approaches, but also disadvantages; one disadvantage here is that despite references to specific problems in the 1790s (the backlash following Godwin's memoir of Wollstonecraft), the reader doesn't get much sense of the circles in which Hays struggled to claim her place.

Judith Thompson attempts to set Thelwall in his proper place as the third and senior member of a foundational Romantic 'triumvirate' with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Building on the turn to Romantic sociability, *The Silenced Partner* focuses [...] on modes of exchange and interaction' arguing for 'paying [Thelwall] the respect of the close rhetorical attention we have long given' to Wordsworth and Coleridge (5). Uniting biographical and historical approaches with close textual attention and rhetorical analysis, Thompson patiently traces not only influence but complex dialogue in poetry, anecdote, critical reflection, and personal letters that circulated among the three core figures. While the project is both corrective and at times speculative (Thompson elucidates Thelwall's lost correspondence by reading between the lines of Coleridge's letters and poetry, and in another section interprets Thelwall's cryptic marginal annotations of *Biographia Literaria*), her detailed textual analysis is intriguing and often quite persuasive.

The book is organized into three sections: Part I, 'Coleridge and Co.', focuses on Thelwall's friendship with Coleridge and Coleridge's early admiration for Thelwall; Part II, 'Annus Mirabilis', functions as a kind of pivot, situating Thelwall's 'Pedestrian Excursion,' his trip to Nether Stowey and Alfoxden and subsequent move to Lyswen where *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* was composed, as subtexts for *Lyrical Ballads*; Part III, 'Re: Wordsworth and Thelwall', traces poetic influence and exchange between these two poets and Romantic thinkers, tracing Thelwall's influence particularly on Wordsworth's troubled *Recluse*. There is no framing introduction and no concluding summation. Rather, the book's dynamic is more iterative than linear, opening with a prologue and a short introduction to each section, followed by three to four chapters. The book's form reiterates Thompson's argument that to read Thelwall properly and in proper relation, we must focus on conversational exchange, commentary, and allusion. In so doing, we get a different version of the two founding poets and Thelwall becomes a necessary part of reading and studying their poetry and significance. Most importantly, the work makes a strong case for studying

Thelwall's full oeuvre from his political, elocutionary, and pedagogical writings to his poetry and quasi-medical writing.

One of the pleasures of Thompson's *The Silenced Partner* is the space given to careful readings of Thelwall's poetry, as well as rereading the better known work of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Thompson's readings, particularly in the sections on Wordsworth, the sonnet and the ode, could be used quite effectively in an undergraduate class on prosody, exemplifying the value of close-reading and oral recitation. Given Thelwall's own impulse toward instruction, the pedagogical contribution of Thompson's work is a sign of her full empathy with her subject. One cannot, however, assume familiarity with Thelwall's poetry on the part of the reader, and the fragments that are cited make one wish for more available editions of Thelwall's writing, particularly of longer works such as *Hope of Albion* (published in parts in *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* and *The Vestibule of Eloquence*). For a reader with only a moderate knowledge of Thelwall, the timeframe of his life and his publication history is often confusing; a timeline or table would have been quite helpful.

A key argument of Thompson's *Silenced Partner* is that 'while *we* no longer know Thelwall's work, *they* [Wordsworth and Coleridge] did' (5) – an argument that could be made likewise for Mary Hays (of other key figures). It is a measure of the similar project of both works and the difference in their realization that Thompson's careful balance of historicism and speculation helps situate Thelwall as an important interlocutor to these two key Romantics, while Bergmann's situates Hays unevenly as a figure caught between her own time and ours. While Bergmann highlights her own situation as a full time teacher of English and her book echoes its likely classroom origins, it is Thompson's book that suggestively invokes a conversational and poetic pedagogy.

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