

Angela Esterhammer, Diane Piccitto and Patrick Vincent, eds., *Romanticism, Rousseau, Switzerland: New Prospects*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. 229. £55. ISBN 9781137475855.

Since the tercentenary of Rousseau's birth there has been a resurgence of interest in his life and work. This new collection is of central importance to this trend and offers insightful contributions to our understanding of the fascinating intersections between Rousseau, Swiss philosophy and landscape, tourism, literature and art in order to interrogate the 'subtleties and counter-currents beneath some of Romanticism's dominant ideologies' (17). The editors make an eminently persuasive case for the parameters indicated in the title by situating the collection within the context of notable research conducted by the likes of Cian Duffy, Thomas McFarland and Gregory Dart. While such research has ably evaluated Rousseau's profound impact upon British Romanticism, the editors propose that 'this relationship is rarely considered in terms of Rousseau's embeddedness within Swiss culture and landscape' (4). The essays thus seek to fill an important but often neglected niche within Romanticism scholarship.

The initial focus of the collection is on Rousseau's contribution to intellectual debates. Enit K. Steiner, for instance, provides a thought provoking reading of *Emile* alongside Francis Brooke's *Julia Mandeville* in order to interrogate the fraught questions surrounding the issues of education and liberty, while Michelle Faubert offers a richly perceptive analysis of Rousseau's treatment of suicide vis-à-vis questions of personal liberty. Although rewarding, Faubert somewhat problematically conflates issues around 'discursive' and 'contagious' debate and the vexed issue of 'silencing contagious texts' (47), and both Faubert and Steiner appear to eschew a consideration of the 'embeddedness' of Rousseau 'within Swiss culture and landscape' promised by the editors. Indeed, this tendency to depart from the parameters indicated by the title and the editors seems a hallmark of the collection. Rachel Corkle, for instance, makes incisive connections between botany, reading and individual interpretative acts, and Wendy C. Nielson examines Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as a means of exploring issues surrounding emotionality and the artificial, but neither essay fully integrates or embeds Rousseau into his Swiss context. The subsequent three essays by Nicola J. Watson, Gordon Turnbull and Pamela Buck examine the significance of Switzerland more specifically, however, and usefully investigate Rousseau-inspired tourism. Watson draws upon an impressive array of material to shed light upon 'Rousseauistic places of retreat' (98) from perspectives as diverse as those of Boswell, Piggott, Helen Maria Williams, Wagner and Byron, but Turnbull's contribution on Boswell's visits to Rousseau in 1764, though eloquently described, appear somewhat over-reliant upon conjectural psychoanalysis (particularly in relation to Rousseau's apparent recognition of Boswell's need for 'forgiveness' and a 'retroactive erasure of the boyhood inscriptions of abjection' [112]), have little correspondence to the 'romanticism' promised in the title, and requires a somewhat incongruous 'skipping forward' (14) for it to mesh with Buck's subsequent chapter on Dorothy Wordsworth. Buck's discussion of Wordsworth is much more successfully engaged with Romanticism's mediation, construction and representation of Swiss scenery and the essay provides a perceptive reading of the manner in which Wordsworth provides a critique of 'a tourist aesthetic that relies on art more than reality' (123). However, Rousseau is distinctly absent from the discussion, which again seems at variance with the emphasis promised by the editors, despite Buck's contribution clearly being of vital importance to highlighting Dorothy Wordsworth's significance as a perceptive 'travel writer in her own right' (130).

The final five chapters of the collection attend to the ways in which Switzerland became a subject of representation. What is particularly interesting about this section is the

manner in which familiar texts and topics (such as Byron's *Manfred* and the notion the Byronic hero) are given a Swiss 'new prospect' alongside fascinating expositions on less familiar material, most notably Kirstyn Leuner's exploration of the picturesque, representation and perception in Rodolphe Töpffer's early comic strips (although this final essay again suffers from the same lack of engagement with the core issues surrounding 'Romanticism, Rousseau, Switzerland'). Patrick Vincent, for instance, offers a particularly insightful and productive investigation of representations of Swiss topography via 'technologies of the picturesque' (15) and very successfully links these to their 'philosophical correlative, Rousseau's state of nature', and the 'Romantic period's social imaginary' (145). Simon Bainbridge, meanwhile, offers a similarly perceptive close reading of *The Peasants of Chamouni* to explore critiques of Swiss mountaineering, although again the wider implications of these issues vis-à-vis Rousseau and Romantic aesthetics/children's literature would have been a useful correlative. Angela Esterhammer's exploration of the 'perpetuation of clichéd images' of Switzerland (16) and their complex intertextuality, meanwhile, is more successful in exposing the artifice of 'imaginary Switzerlands' in 'increasingly textualized and touristic' forms (197-8), but this needed contextualising in relation to Rousseau, and a link to issues associated with nationalism would have enriched the perceptiveness of the essay even further.

As a whole, the collection more than fulfils its aim of articulating 'new prospects' and is likely to be seminal in terms of signalling and laying the foundations for the current resurgence of interest in Rousseau. The essays could have been more clearly signposted in terms of their grouping into themes and some of the contributors wander a little away from the parameters indicated by the title and the editors' preamble. As such, the title should not be read too literally. Nevertheless, the collection is undoubtedly impressive and is to be commended as an invaluable contribution by eminent voices within Romanticism scholarship.

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