Mark Canuel, ed., *British Romanticism: Criticism and Debates*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. Pp. 634. £35 (pb). ISBN 9780415523820.

This edited collection traces the 'essential topics' of Romantic literary criticism (since New Historicism), while 'offering fresh takes on the area' (i). The aim is to provide various critical approaches with divergent theoretical assumptions and implications. The essays are chosen, then, not to present a balanced coverage of Romantic authors and texts, but to demonstrate contrasting theoretical positions in literary criticism. The general introduction opens with a sweep through major critical movements pre- and post- New Historicism (1-12). A small section of 'teaching ideas' is provided, which might be useful for early career teachers (12-13).

The forty-four essays themselves are compartmentalised into eleven, rather loosely grouped, sections; including 'Affects and ethics' and 'Literature, media, mediation' (361-417; 581-634). Some of the supposed divisions seem rather arbitrary: it is not clear, for instance, how 'the literary' of one section ['Politics, ideology, and the literary' (17-68)] differs from 'literary form' in another ['Aesthetics and literary form' (69-125)]. Similarly, discussion of the relationship between reader and author infuses both 'Audiences and reading publics' (127-179) and 'Authorship and authority' (181-241). Alan Liu's contribution (75-87) is located in the second section, despite the title of his essay explicitly stating its engagement with 'postmodernism' [ostensibly another section is concerned with 'Modernity and postmodernity' (473-526)]. This might be confusing for someone coming to Romantic literary criticism early in the course of their studies [the book's target market is explicitly undergraduate and postgraduate students (i)]. This is not particularly a criticism of the book – taxonomies of embodied literary theories are slippery things – but perhaps the reader could have been more explicitly encouraged to read across these apparent differentiations.

All sections have an independent introduction, which provides useful background information on the critical history of that study area, and concludes with its own further reading list. Each section comprises four essays; three previously published, and one newly written. There are a number of well-known pieces, which would help students gain a good general grounding in Romantic literary criticism, such as, Marjorie Levinson's New Historicist reading of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' (23-32), Lucy Newlyn's response to Bloomian theory in her examination of the anxiety of reception (133-145), and Jon Mee's response to M.H. Abrams's theory of the Romantic secularised imagination in his discussion of Wordsworth's chastened enthusiasm (438-450). The new essays offer contemporary engagement with established critical ideas. Daniel O'Quinn's fine essay examines the political unrest that underpinned productions of Sheridan's plays in the 1790s (57-68). Canuel's own contribution reimagines Godwin's views on the usefulness of punishment as explored in *Caleb Williams* (114-125). Andrew Franta contradicts T.S. Eliot's long-accepted notion that Shelley was 'humorless' by re-examining the irony of 'Ode to the West Wind' and *A Defence of Poetry* (170-179). Margaret Russett unpicks the multi-layered response of Blake to Milton as a god-like figure, in order to 'describe Blake as a *media* critic of authorship' (222-241). Jacqueline Labbe's essay takes readers, clearly and thoughtfully, through the seemingly paradoxical constructions of gender (which are both classifications and forms of experiment) in the novels of women writers (294-302). E.J. Clery defends Barbauld against postcolonial critiques of her apparent cultural imperialism in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* by arguing that the poem instead expresses an idealised world-view in which we are all able to participate in cooperative global commerce (349-359). David Collings reworks the study of 'indirection' in 'Tintern Abbey' to argue against the assumption behind New Historicism that evasion is the denial of history; instead Collings argues that Wordsworth's 'affective subjectivity' inherits and modifies the literary

conventions of sensibility and Gothicism (409-417). Colin Jager helpfully outlines critical discussions of Romanticism as split between religiosity and secularism, and goes on to complicate this understanding by examining 'The Thorn' as emblematic of religion being a 'spiritual entanglement' with the material world (464-472). Orrin Wang considers representations of pipers in Blake and Keats in order to examine clichés as growing from print modernity (518-526). Sharon Ruston's wide-ranging essay explores the competing meanings and uses of the term 'transformation' within scientific and literary discourses, to show how the term was co-opted by those of different political persuasions to interpret the French Revolution (571-579). And Tom Mole examines a sample of Victorian anthologies containing extracts of book-length Romantic poems in order to provide a quantitative study, from 1822 until the *fin-de-siècle*, of how 'gems' of Byron's, Hemans', and Shelley's poetry were abstracted from their original meanings and what this implies about their reception history (625-634).

In places there are deliberate omissions from the original articles – such as Wolfson's 'Gendering the Soul' (249-264) where readers are told '[A section of this essay in its original form details the gendering of the soul in Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats]' (251). The reader might find these lacunae frustrating; although the editor may argue that these interludes detailing what has been expunged might serve as useful guides for those whose interest has been piqued by the rest of the article.

All in all, this is a handy compendium that is sure to be taken from the shelf and dipped into repeatedly.

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