

**James Mulholland, *Sounding Imperial: Poetic Voice and the Politics of Empire, 1730-1820*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. 232. £34. ISBN 9781421408545.**

**Evan Gottlieb, *Romantic Globalism: British Literature and Modern World Order, 1750-1830*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2014. Pp. 224. £20.50. ISBN 9780814252857.**

Given Romanticism's increased attention to global formations and its continued interest in exploring the nuances of British imperial thought, James Mulholland's *Sounding Imperial: Poetic Voice and the Politics of Empire, 1730-1820* and Evan Gottlieb's *Romantic Globalism: British Literature and Modern World Order, 1750-1830* are both timely and relevant.

Mulholland's book provides an excellent example of the combination of incisive formalist analysis with sound historical research (no pun intended). In contextualizing his close readings of new literary techniques for simulating the 'auditory dimensions of vocalized sound' (3) within eighteenth-century British colonial history, Mulholland offers a fresh perspective for understanding poetic voice that goes beyond superficial considerations of poetic persona. The imitation of oral voices and impersonation of overseas speakers not only appealed to English readers eager to hear the 'wild and passionate' (2) voices of the uncivilized past, but, as Mulholland argues, also presented a welcome respite from a growing print industry that increasingly sapped poetry of the 'affective charge of speech' (3). The need to recover the authenticity of native and foreign voices, consequently, was not merely a matter of nostalgia, but part of a broader cultural project to 'animate and reenergize printed poetry' (4).

According to Mulholland, that project was central to the Enlightenment's systematic comparison of diverse cultures and places around the globe. It also provided an effective framework in which the mechanics of colonialism could be debated and examined. While he concedes that the imitation and reconstruction of other voices constitutes a form of cultural appropriation, Mulholland argues that such a reading often 'mischaracterizes ... [and] misses crucial details of colonialism's cross-cultural exchange' (153). In fact, it is a major argument of the book that such exchanges are better viewed as 'collaborations' through which both English and colonial authors borrowed liberally from each other in their efforts to develop their respective cultural and national identities (153).

*Sounding Imperial* opens with a reading of Thomas Gray, the quintessential English poet, whose poetic experiments with sound in 'The Bard' (1757) and other poems laid the groundwork for similar innovations in Welsh, Scottish, and Anglo-Indian writers. The use of quotation marks to differentiate between voices, shifts in modes of address and points of view, and the liberal use of allusion and citation, for example, all contribute to evoking a sense of oral performance in which the relationship between author and reader is transformed into one of speaker and listener. For Welsh writers like Evan Evans, Edward Williams, and Felicia Hemans, the reproduction of the structures of Welsh prosody in poetry became a specific kind of technique to simulate the presence of voice, a technique that became conducive to creating a distinctive Welsh national and cultural identity. Similar techniques can be seen in James Macpherson's Ossian poems in which the imitation of oral discourse creates a sense of immediacy, intimacy, and communal belonging, a process Mulholland calls 'intimate hailing' (109). In the final chapter, Mulholland addresses the impersonation of Indian speakers in Anglo-Indian poetry. In this chapter, the

book's treatment of imperial concerns is most pronounced. For Mulholland, the representation of voice in the poetry of writers like William Jones, Eyles Irwin, and John Leyden 'personalize the effect of Britain's colonial expansion' in a way that reflects the colonial structures back to the empire itself (122). Gray is an important model here as well, where the Orientalizing of Gray's 'The Bard' became a means to debate British rule in eastern India. Consistent with the book's main argument, Mulholland sees such imperial engagements as double edged. While the enlistment of native voices to justify British colonialism appears to be a clear-cut case of cultural appropriation, the representation of colonial abuses makes such practices appear much more ambiguous.

*Poetic Voices* is most original in its discussion of the literary experimentations and techniques employed to evoke the experience of listening. The result is a 'cross-cultural and cross-media poetics,' as Mulholland describes it, in which such techniques as quotations, modes of address, typographical experiments, paratextual prefaces, annotations, and other poetic experiments helped readers 'imagine reading as audible performances' and 'make the oral past audible' (21). Also welcome is Mulholland's attempt to complicate our understanding of the imperial implications of the impersonation of non-English voices in English literature. While 'collaboration' appears to me too strong a word to describe that relationship, Mulholland makes clear that we must do better as critics when reading the politics of voice with respect to issues of empire.

Evan Gottlieb's *Romantic Globalism* is broader in its perspective. Gottlieb uses the term 'Romantic globalism' to describe the process by which writers of the period encouraged readers to think globally and consider the ethical implications of such thinking. While the imperative to think globally is certainly not particular to the Romantic period, Gottlieb's book is about the unique characteristics of the period's evolving relationship to globalization, a term Gottlieb is careful to theorize and historicize. Gottlieb does recognize the global implications of romantic imperialism but argues that Romantic globalism 'took shape as an alternative to, rather than merely an elaboration or anticipation of, imperialism' (10).

The chapters of *Romantic Globalism* set out to elaborate the specific features of Romanticism's 'global imaginary' (3). In Chapter 1, Gottlieb argues that the recognition of the interdependence of nations, particularly by Scottish enlightenment thinkers like Adam Smith, David Hume, and John Millar helped shape new conceptions about the emerging world system of global capital. While Gottlieb's argument about the Scottish enlightenment's theory of the modern global order, particularly with respect to international commerce and conjectural histories, is expected, his reading of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic romances as a form of cosmopolitan appreciation of foreign cultures and peoples – a process Gottlieb terms 'sympathetic cosmopolitanism' – is new and exciting (12). A similar expansion of established readings of the globalism of romantic writing can be seen in Gottlieb's efforts to put Anna Barbauld's well-recognized *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in conversation with lesser known, but equally globally reflective, poems by Felicia Hemans and Anne Grant. In Chapter 4, Gottlieb develops a reading of Byron's so-called Orientalist works – *Lara* (1814), *The Siege of Corinth* (1816), and *Sardanapalus* (1821) – in which Bryon, Gottlieb argues, imagines the world in terms of the clash of civilizations. Gottlieb also develops a reading of Scott's cosmopolitanism, but the payoff here is Gottlieb's treatment of Scott's European novels *Quentin Durward* (1823) and *Anne of Geierstein* (1829), novels that receive less critical attention than Scott's better-known Scottish-themed novels. This approach allows Gottlieb to discuss less-considered aspects of Romantic

globalism, such as ‘global hospitality,’ which Gottlieb describes as the ‘formal acceptance of otherness that holds out the possibility of greater accord between individuals as well as nations, without eliding their differences’ (14).

*Romantic Globalism* is formally committed to understanding the history of globalization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its ethical concerns, however, are farther-reaching. For Gottlieb, *Romantic Globalism* helps explain the development of the egalitarian vision of nineteenth-century globalism that continues to inspire many today. The book’s bias is consequently clearly evident: globalization is a good thing because it encourages sympathy, cosmopolitanism, and tolerance, all of which is captured in Gottlieb’s term ‘global humanity’ (40). Yet, it is the book’s strong historicist perspective that produces its most important insights. Reading Barbauld, Hemans, Grant, and Scott in terms of growing concerns about the global implications of the Napoleonic Wars, for example, convincingly supports the argument that Romantic-era writers ‘shared [a] commitment to helping readers conceptualize their changing global position’ (88).

*Romantic Globalism* concludes with an elaboration of the Romantic turn to ‘global hospitality,’ a principle that develops out of, but more importantly extends, earlier expressions of tolerance in Romantic-era writing (142). Scott’s *Quentin Durward* and *Anne of Geierstein*, according to Gottlieb, formulate a historical vision of a ‘new world order’ in which ‘each of us is capable of extending unconditional acceptance to all others’ (145). While such conclusions may appear, at best, a bit too idealistic and, at worst, unconcerned with the disasters of globalization then and now, *Romantic Globalism*, like *Sounding Imperial*, ought to be commended for its effort to extend our understanding of global and imperial relations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Both Mulholland and Gottlieb develop innovative ways for reading eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature’s engagement with global and imperial issues and for this reason deserve the critical attention these two books will undoubtedly receive.

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