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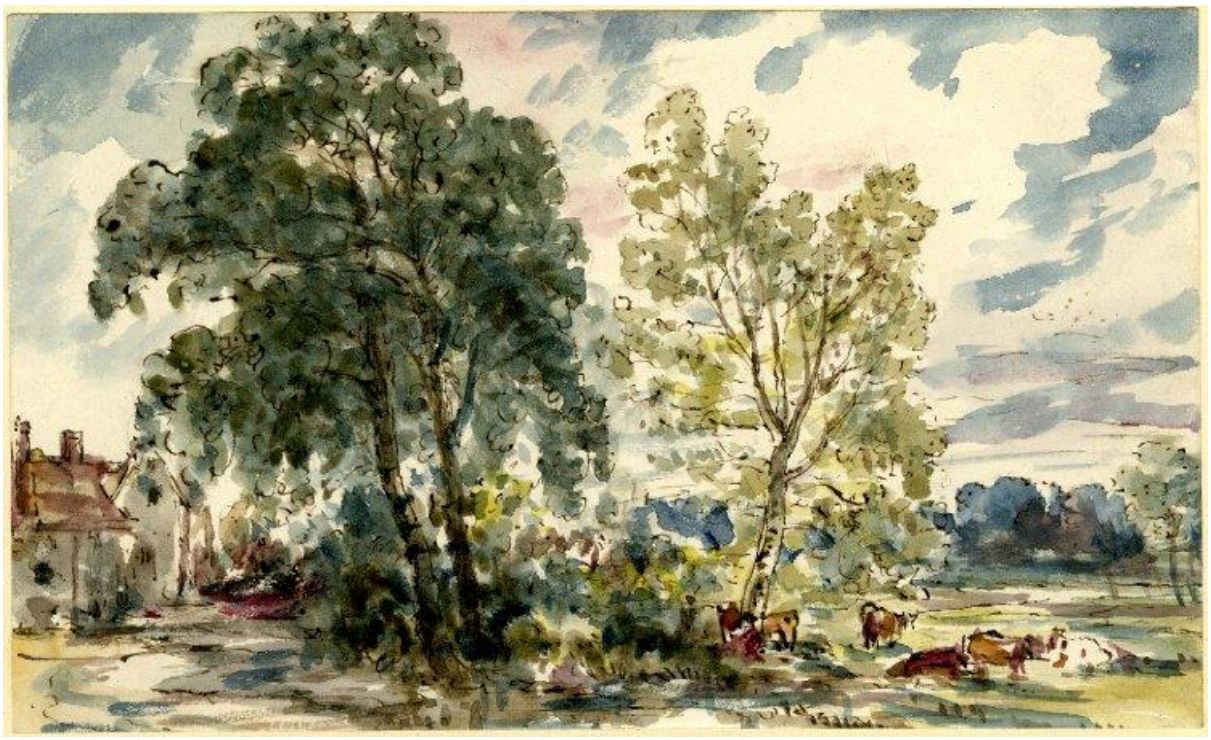

John Constable, 'Landscape with Trees and Cattle' (1832). © Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduction used under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.

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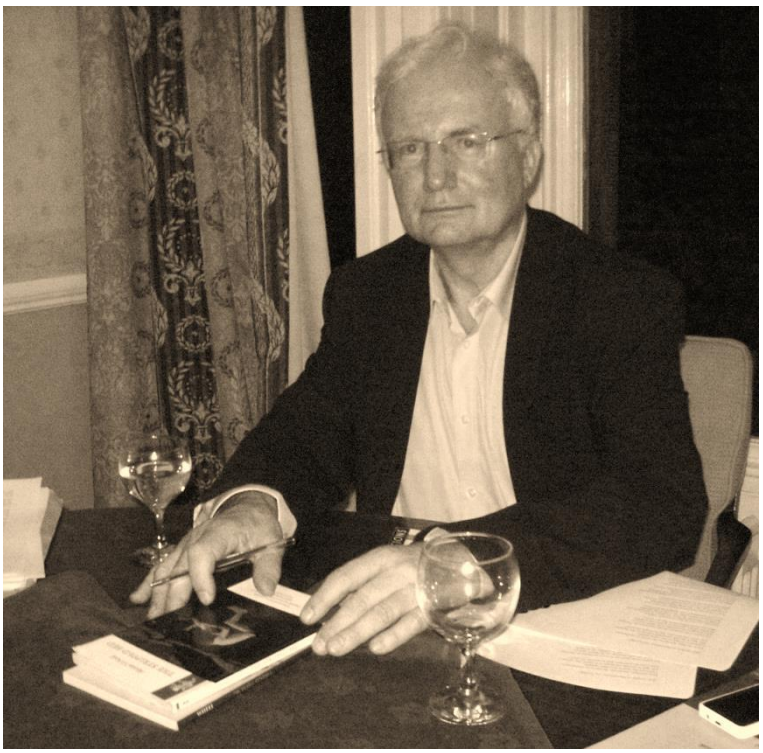

**1953-2018**

# *Dedication*

This issue of the *BARS Review* is dedicated to the memory of an eminent scholar of Romanticism, Michael O'Neill. Until his death on 21 December 2018, Michael O'Neill was Professor of English at Durham University, where he taught for nearly forty years. During that time he served for two three-year periods as Head of Department and as Director of the University's Institute of Advanced Study. His research concentrated on questions of literary achievement and on literary dialogue and influence. These research interests are the preserve of his most recent monograph, *Shelleyan Reimaginings & Influence: New Relations* (published posthumously by Oxford University Press in March 2019). He published widely on Romantic Poetry, especially the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and on an array of Victorian and twentieth- and twenty-first-century poets. He co-founded and edited *Poetry Durham* from 1982 to 1994. He received many awards for his criticism and poetry, including a Distinguished Scholar Award from the Keats-Shelley Association of American for 2018, an Eric Gregory Award in 1983, and a Cholmondeley Award from the Society of Authors in 1990. His most recent collections of poems include *Return of the Gift* (Arc, 2018) and *Crash & Burn* (Arc, 2019). Michael's loss as a colleague, academic, and poet is only equalled by his loss as a friend.

*Mark Sandy*
*Editor*

# Reviews

## John Regan, *Poetry and the Idea of Progress, 1760-1790*. London and New York: Anthem Press, 2018. Pp. 222. £70, $115. ISBN 9781783087723.

John Regan's rich study argues that for some later eighteenth-century thinkers, poetry not only reflected or illustrated ideas about progress, but actually embodied it. As he argues, 'a limited but significant number of theorists did not form ideas of human development *and* or *with* poetry but in a strong sense *in* or *through* it […] Thinking about progress is not external to poetry: it is poetry's verbal fabric' (161).

The period 1760 to 1790 saw theories about progress proliferate: Christian, humanist, cyclical, stadial, conjectural. Although discussions of verse did feature in these (particularly regarding what a society's poetry can tell us about the extent of its development), Regan wants to draw our attention to 'a more subtle, less copious' body of theoretical writing, in which the 'special verbal characteristics of poetic language' were themselves understood in terms of their relationship to progress (4-5). Regan locates his study within the fairly new field of historical poetics; readers less familiar with this body of scholarship may find it helpful to start by reading the Conclusion, which usefully describes the main debates, and sets out Regan's position that 'a truly historical poetics can only be realized if the technique of metred or rhyming language can be savoured in mouths and ears' (161). The book as a whole is committed to exploring poetry as a sensory experience; eighteenth-century notions of 'taste' and aesthetics provide an important underpinning to Regan's thinking.

Chapter 1 seeks to refresh how we approach eighteenth-century poetic prescriptivism. Unhooking it from political conservatism, Regan argues that the prescriptivism of Samuel Johnson and Henry Home, Lord Kames aimed to promote pleasure, which was for them poetry's principal goal. Chapter 2 turns to Thomas Sheridan's lectures on elocution, which drew on stadial theories of history to examine the state of poetry in modern, commercial society. For Sheridan, the expansion of print had obscured 'poetry's immanent power', which resided in its verbal performance (49). However, Sheridan believed that a proper alertness to poetic 'harmony' could bring human beings closer to God, enabling progress towards the divine. In Chapter 3, Regan considers the dialogue on prosodic theory between Joshua Steele and James Burnett, Lord Monboddo. Informed by Monboddo's theory of linguistic evolution, their debate centred on the correct approach to accent, and explored the relationship between sense perception and poetry.

Chapters 4 and 5 and the Afterword are likely to be of special interest to students of the Romantic period. Chapter 4 reads Thomas Percy's prefatory essays to his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* as a 'form of stadial progress writing' (101); like Adam Ferguson, Percy believed that modern verse had lost the rugged energy of older poetry. Yet as Regan demonstrates, Percy's editorial practices in the *Reliques* sometimes ran counter to this view, for he also 'regularize[d]' his source material, rendering the ballad a 'repeatable rhythmic object' with commercial value (123). Chapter 5 develops that idea of 'the redemptive power of the oral primitive' (101), considering the responses of Hugh Blair and Henry Home, Lord Kames to the Ossian scandal. For Blair, Ossian's 'energetic, perspicuous "rudeness" and lack of "polish"' – products of a more primitive social stage – added up to 'a redemptive sublimity' (126-7). To recover this ancient poetic language would be to offset the enervating 'excesses of modern language', Blair believed, and to effect civic and moral improvement (139).

Regan's Afterword brings us to 1814, with Francis Jeffrey's review of Byron's *The Corsair* and *The Bride of Abydos*. The review demonstrates the persistence into the new century of these arguments about progress. It attempts to resolve the tension, ever-present in eighteenth-century stadial history, between a commitment to improvement and a concern that society

deteriorates into 'stultifying manners' even as it reaches civilisation (148). For Jeffrey, Byron presents a solution. By returning to 'poetic rudeness', he renews modern verse, reinvigorating the old heroic couplet and forcing a violent prosodic progress – although Regan is alert to the 'gentrifying' impulse in Byron's primitivism and orientalism (150).

One of the strengths of Regan's book is its deft handling of an impressive range of writers. Readers less used to prosodic analysis may find some passages rather dense, and the thrust of the argument is occasionally hard to follow, but the book repays careful reading. Especially welcome is Regan's attention to the physicality of spoken poetry, and his sensitivity to the historical nuances of poetic terms: 'polish', 'rudeness', 'manners'. He wisely avoids pinning the developments he traces onto 'the doughty monolith "Romanticism"' (124), but the book points to some intriguing avenues for Romantic-period scholarship, for instance in its thoughtful commentary on the intersections between oral verse, antiquarianism, historical writing, national identity and the reshaping of folk traditions; Scott and Wordsworth are both mentioned in these contexts. This is a wide-ranging, discriminating book, which moves skilfully between diverse fields and critical approaches.

*Fiona Milne*
*University of York*

## Roger Maioli, *Empiricism and the Early Theory of the Novel*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. xxii + 202. £79.99. ISBN 9783319398587.

*Empiricism and the Early Theory of the Novel* explores the impact of the empirical turn in philosophy on how imaginative writing could be justified in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Empiricists undermined traditional defences of poetry (that it copied not particulars but universals) and valued history above poetry as a reliable 'repository of facts for the study of nature, mankind, and human societies' (9). If history were such a repository, however, what of imagined histories? Could a fictional account also be a source of knowledge about the world? These are central questions for eighteenth-century novelists and Maioli's study.

Maioli first explores the empiricism of David Hume and its implications for the value of fiction. Hume's attitude towards the novel must be inferred, since he rarely referred to contemporary fiction. On the other hand, 'fictional illustrations and thought experiments play an important role in his work', showing an acceptance that 'the counterfactual scenarios of fiction are just as able to yield empirical knowledge as the factual scenarios of history' (49). Literary scholars often regard Hume's epistemology as an implied theory of the novel, but Maioli cautions against such a conclusion, arguing that the literary critical tendency to see 'a mutually reinforcing relationship between empiricism and the novel' (viii) is not justified by a reading of the empiricists themselves, for whom the novel tended to be 'a vulgar peddler of misconceptions' (x).

In a brief 'Interlude', Maioli contends that while Hume's writings exposed the contradiction between 'the principles of empiricism and the novel's pedagogic mission', novelists were as 'indifferent' to Hume as he was dismissive of their works (65). They sought solutions to this contradiction not because of direct influence, but because they themselves shared these empirical principles, which became widespread as the period progressed. Most novelists before Fielding, Maioli later observes, dodged the problem of whether literary worlds afforded knowledge of reality by denying their works were fictional. Fielding, meanwhile, 'set out to write explicit fictions while renouncing neither the authority of experience nor the pedagogic mission of literature' (88). Probability offered a solution, since events could be probable or improbable regardless of whether they were factual or fictional: 'history' for Fielding

could include prose fiction if it maintained probability, thus giving the reader knowledge beyond their own limited experience and a discernment of general truths about human nature.

Focusing on three quixotic novels, Maioli develops the idea that fictional worlds yield practicable propositions about the world of experience. Reconsidering Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, Maioli shows how the conversation between Arabella and the Doctor, in which she is finally 'cured' of her addiction to romances, is more effective in articulating the problems of giving fiction empirical value than it is in solving them. In *Northanger Abbey*, Maioli finds that Austen's very success in creating lifelike characters and settings blunts the edge of any moral lessons we may be able to draw from her work: 'Austen's ethical and formal commitments suggest that her local verdicts should remain local'. Faith in the educational power of fiction is examined by juxtaposing Godwin's *Caleb Williams* with his unpublished essay, 'Of History and Romance'. Godwin's 'vigorous defense of fiction' is undercut, Maioli avows, when the essay, concedes the virtual impossibility of empirically faithful fiction: 'To sketch a few bold outlines of character is no desperate undertaking; but to tell precisely how such a person would act in a given situation, requires a sagacity scarcely less than divine' (130)

From authors concerned to meet 'the empirical challenge', Maioli turns to an author who took a positive pleasure in subverting it. In *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne 'mock[s] the notion […] that exposure to the worlds of fiction is a proper replacement for the direct observation of life' (143) and refuses, even more decisively than Austen, to signal what message or 'life lesson' the reader might draw from the novel (145). Didactic intentions are less easy to dismiss in *A Sentimental Journey*, however. Yorick's journey, Maioli suggests, offers 'emotional states that we *can* access, as they arise inwardly in us through our sympathetic engagement with imaginary others' (151). Accordingly, for Sterne, fiction 'trigger[s] sensations' rather than describes the world and these 'are *real* and potentially illuminating in their own right' (156), even as he also realised that in practice sentimental engagement was too often both self-centred and fleeting.

Maioli's conclusion demonstrates how eighteenth-century novel theory prefigures modern arguments about the value of the humanities. Eighteenth-century novelists, as he says, 'were among the first to experience the pressure of the new epistemic dispensation' (177) and a consideration of the challenges they faced speaks to the challenges we still face in justifying the worth of literary study. It is a thought-provoking end to a thoroughly engaging book.

*Gillian Skinner*
*Durham University*

## Diego Saglia, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 261. £75. ISBN 9781198426411.

After the Hundred Days, and post-Waterloo, Britons took advantage of newly-opened borders to travel to the Continent. In parallel with these physical displacements, British nationalism was increasingly forged in relation to the Continental 'other'. It may once have been tempting to view the literature of Britain in the opening decades of the nineteenth century as mentally 'closed' to foreign imports. Indeed, this view of an intrinsically insular British cultural sphere in the Romantic period and beyond has remained remarkably persistent. This, Diego Saglia reminds us, is to misread the literary marketplace of 1815-1832. His timely examination adds a welcome voice to recent studies of cosmopolitanism in the British literature of the period. Comparative examinations have increased in the last two decades, lifting the 'fog in the Channel', and shining a light both on continental imports that enriched 'native' literature, and on the reception of British literature abroad. Saglia focuses on the later Romantic period, viewing it as fraught with ambivalences, contradictions, and tensions. He argues that 'imports and contaminations' from

the Continent 'complicated ideas of a discrete national culture' (xiii). The study refers to an impressive range of source material – from periodicals to anthologies, drama, theatre and poetry. Close readings and historical analysis combine to make a enjoyable and engaging read.

There is much to admire in the case studies throughout this monograph, as well as in the breadth of scope more generally. In Chapter 2, close readings of John Bowring's *Specimens of the Russian Poets* (1820-21), John Gibson Lockhart's *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823), Charles Brinsley Sheridan's *The Songs of Greece* (1823) and Edgar Taylor and Sarah Austin's *The Lays of the Minnesingers, or German Troubadors of the Twelfth and Thirteenth* (1825) shows the works' 'engagement with historical and political questions from transcultural and transhistoric perspectives' (104). Chapter 3 gives a fine overview of contemporary, and modern, translation theories. In the period, these were invariably closer to the domesticating model, despite the important intervention of Germaine de Staël's 'On the Spirit of Translations', first published in 1816, which encouraged respect for the 'foreigness' of the source text. Saglia's reading of the cosmopolitan circle at Holland House and their 'Italian activities' sees their collaborative exchanges and their uses of translation 'as a way of expanding and strengthening the House's cultural and political authoritativeness' (141). The reader moves to the stage in Chapter 4, in a lively examination of 'national' theatre which argues that 'the idea that there was an intrinsically English stage between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appears to be a precarious one at best' (156). The study concludes with a fine chapter reading the post-Napoleonic Politics of Southey, Byron and Hemans, adding productively to the voice of Romantic scholarship that has questioned what is 'British' about 'British Romantic Poetry'.

Some lines of continuity throughout the eighteenth century and into the Romantic period remain unexplored, in the interest of the absorbingly tight temporal focus that the book maintains throughout. The first chapter, on periodicals and the construction of European Literatures, is a fine reading of the 'Great Reviews' of the early nineteenth century: the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, *Blackwood's*, the *New Monthly* and less-familiar publications. It reads the engagement of publishers and reviewers alike with foreign fiction in the period as a political affair. 'Twas ever thus. That connections can be made with the 'policies' of the first great English reviews of the mid-eighteenth century – Griffith's *Monthly*; Smollet's *Critical* – indicates that this work will be of interest and relevance to those working outside the Romantic period. Much remains to be done on the engagement with those who commissioned reviews and translations with the work of their counterparts across Europe. It is outwith the aims of *European Literatures in Britain* to provide a comprehensive account of these pan-European connections, meaning, *ipso facto*, that there is certainly scope for future researchers to pick up where Saglia leaves off. Likewise, the coda – entitled 'The European Vistas of Historical Fiction' – engages with Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) as exemplifying 'national concerns, international contexts, and transnational vistas' which characterize 'novel-writing in the post-Waterloo decades' (230). Saglia's reading of Scott is convincing. There is, however, a great deal more work to be done on the translators and translations of prose fiction in the period, taking into account not the more mainstream historical novel, but rather the still-popular (although now largely neglected) novel of sensibility. *European Literatures in Britain* points some directions forward.

In short, Diego Saglia's fine study is highly recommended to all who research and teach Romantic-period literature. As the Continent of the present feels increasingly isolated, he encourages us to open up our Romantic readings to the Continent of the past.

*Gillian Dow*
*University of Southampton*

## Jonathan Crimmins, *The Romantic Historicism to Come*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018. Pp. 180. £91.80. ISBN 9781501326974.

Thinking about the ways in which history embeds literature defines the conundrum of historicism. Among many scholars, Alan Liu's suggestive argument that history is universally a loss for which we mourn retrospectively is emblematic of the dilemma of historicism. As we pay tribute to the deceased through a retrospective look at a past life, so the historicist critic assesses, dialectically, the place of the past in the present. Such a dialectic of past and present leaves, however, the question of *what is to come* unanswered. Quoting Virgil's *Georgics*, an enigmatic key question that Jonathan Crimmins's book asks himself and his readers is: 'scilicet et tempus veniet' (10), how do we truly know of what is to come? This reference to Virgil's opus reflects Crimmins's general intention to solve the historicist conundrum by revising our idea of history. He contends that history should not be seen as 'that which is no longer', like a deceased love one, but as 'that which persists in the future' (3).

Recalling Derrida's idea of *living on*, Crimmins's redefinition of history as that which persists into the future frees history from the prison of 'the present-tense solipsism' (11). Thinking beyond this temporal solipsism illuminates a new understanding of history as participant 'in the new conditions' (11). The preclusion, for Crimmins, of such a reconceptualization of history stems from those theories of mediation, which have lastingly offered a vision of the past or reality as an 'unmediated', 'unaltered thing or experience (5). It follows, as Crimmins contends, that mediation is symptomatic of our misconception of history as a transcendentally lost time. Re-assessing these theories, Crimmins's redefinition of history demonstrates how the past is unequivocally 'the material conditions that persist in the future' (15).

Throughout the five chapters of the book, Crimmins explores varied façades of history's material conditions to persist in the future. Of *Frankenstein*, Crimmins stresses Mary Shelley's intention to depict her two Gothic heroes 'as fallen angels of conflicting values' (31), namely the Gothicized sentimental and the Gothicized Romantic. For Crimmins, Shelley's duality of the sentimental and Romantic translates into her interest in exploring those tensions between matter and spirit, the psychological vector of bodily impulses and the ideological vector of individual experience – an 'unresolved duality' (47) that emblematizes the fall of Frankenstein and the Creature.

Reading Mary Wollstonecraft and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Crimmins remarks that both philosophers use the metaphor of history-as-body to suggest historical development compares with the growth of human bodies. Thus, Crimmins contends that 'past, present, and future hold together like an individual's existence' (59): historical teleology now becomes a deterministic account of the laws of causation. Crimmins's subsequent reading of William Godwin's 'Essay of History and Romance' reprises Wollstonecraft's determinism. Crimmins's account of Godwin's essay demonstrates, in fact, that his choice of romance provides Godwin with an intellectual platform to consider how the past 'offers futures that break with the repressive conditions of the present' (68).

The third chapter offers a refined philosophical account of history's persistence into the future. Crimmins's configurations of the intellectual interactions among Immanuel Kant, G.W. Hegel and Friedrich Kittler illustrate the book's central thesis that history is not an irretrievably lost time. Extrapolating from these interactions, Crimmins concludes that the relation between history and freedom in terms of Subject and Substance introduces the idea of historical freedom, which opposes traditional notions of temporal fixity.

Illustrative examples of historical freedom are derived from his reading of Walter Scott's antiquarianism in the *Waverley* novels and P.B. Shelley's solution to love and revolution in *Prometheus Unbound*. Crimmins observes that Scott's antiquarianism is emblematic of an

asynchronous entity or randomness of the interaction among semi-determinist systems (past, present and future), which challenges historical teleology and addresses the problem of futurity. In a final account of *Prometheus Unbound*, read through the lens of queer theory, Crimmins shows how Shelley's treatment of freedom and futurity, as well as entanglement of love (and intermingling of means and ends), opens up possibilities for political and social change. Crimmins's acute engagement with complex philosophical theories both provides insightful and original readings of familiar Romantic texts and offers an ingenious revisionist account of the role of historicism within Romantic studies.

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*Durham University*

## G. A. Rosso, *The Religion of Empire: Political Theology in Blake's Prophetic Symbolism*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2016. Pp. 274. £54.44. ISBN: 9780814213162.

## Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger, eds., *William Blake's Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018. Pp. 297. £80. ISBN: 9781526121943.

G.A. Rosso in *The Religion of Empire* argues that 'Blake's early and sustained interest in empire cannot be understood apart from his lifelong immersion in religion' (1). At the heart of Blake's 'multifaceted symbolism' is Rahab, an amalgamation of 'two differently gendered biblical figures', who first 'enters the narrative in revisions to Night VIII' (55). To determine the religious and political dimensions of Blake's apocalyptic symbolism and language Rosso grounds his rich and rewarding readings of the long prophecies in biblical scholarship as well as critical works on Blake's reinterpretation of the Bible: 'Rahab shows that Blake did not retreat into an isolated, apolitical mysticism or gravitate toward a pro-imperial missionary Christianity in the second half of his career' (19).

Chapter 1 is on Rahab and symbolic networks of the dragon-harlot combination, originating in Old and New Testament books. Rosso analyses Blake's adaption of biblical sources, exploring in detail the connections that can exist between historical events and biblical accounts. He notes 'Blake is acutely aware of Christianity's tense relationship with the Roman Empire, which speaks to his own tense relation to the British Empire (36). Chapter 2 situates the analysis in the manuscript of *Vala or The Four Zoas*, where Rahab becomes part of the story of Jesus (59). Rosso discusses the figure's new symbolism (hermaphroditism), agency and (visual) presence (73-74, 79-80) to determine its complex meanings (Rahab has a 'mystery' written on her forehead, 70), while paying close attention to eschatological and political resonances (61ff, 70, 83, 86ff) and, of course, Blake's gendering.

In Chapter 3, which interprets the Bard's Song (*Milton*), Rosso examines Blake's response to Milton, the English Reformation and Deism, analysing Rahab's relationship with Satan more broadly through Blake's treatment of female characters and feminine qualities in characters (95-96, 109, 111-14). Building on feminist criticism, Chapter 4 explains the relationship between Rahab and Ololon (Rahab's eternal counterpart) in terms of the concept of the 'twofold emanation'. Aligning these with Boehme's 'Sophia-Wisdom' (127) and Neoplatonic and Gnostic traditions, Rosso uses moments of realization in the text (130-31, 144, 146) to investigate Blake's take on Milton's legacy (124, 134, 137): '*Milton* shows that Rahab

bedevilled Milton and Milton comes to recognize her as an aspect of his selfhood […]. Milton's view of gender and apocalypse' is transformed by Blake (156).

Chapters 5 and 6 trace sexual meaning, biblical allusion, theological implication and political relevance of the role, presence and transformation of Rahab in *Jerusalem.* First, via weaving imagery (veil, nets, threads of narrative and point of view) Rosso links several of the female characters or emanations to explore questions of gender, identity and sexuality, converging in the relationship between Jerusalem, Vala and Rahab. Within in the context of *Jerusalem* the latter 'appears' (i.e. manifests) as 'Vala's temporal incarnation' in chapter 3 (158). Again, Rosso offers compelling readings of texts and images, emphasizing the importance of Rahab while dismantling Blake's (alleged) sexism. Chapter 6 culminates in the analysis of the language and religion of empire, Rahab symbolism and Blake's 'apocalyptic approach' and attack of British imperialism (198). Rosso discusses Rahab's connections to Irish nationalism through the figure of Erin (204-07) as well as Elizabethan ideological and empirical ambitions ('Bacon-Newton-Locke', 208), the 'Trojan myth' (221, 227) and Jehovah's covenant to stress: '*Jerusalem*'s nationalist symbolism and universalistic language from part of the central dynamic of the poem and are contested at every level, most fully and clearly in the titular heroine's relationship with her archrival and oppressor Rahab' (232). This beautifully written, very confident and accessible book gives substance to the fact that Blake grew up reading the Bible.

According to *William Blake's Gothic Imagination*, it was Martin Myrone's exhibition – *Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination* at Tate Britain in 2006 – which, in the words of the editors, Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger, created the first opportunity 'to read Blake and the Gothic in terms of each other' (16). The chapters, which establish the main contemporary influences, pose questions about style to investigate what in Blake can count as Gothic, naturally return to Blake's creation myth as well as the various depictions of his monsters. Blake's alliance with the Gothic tradition extends to both early and late works and Blake, it turns out (just like Ann Radcliffe in response to Burke), envisaged his own version of the Gothic.

Chapters in Part I position Blake's writing style within the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival. David Baulch, who is interested in difference and repetition (as a Gothic trope), defines Blake's Gothic as 'Living Form': as 'without a stable structure, codified laws, or political programme or permanent spiritual destination' (53). Baulch examines the versions of 'Death's Door' and concludes that this image's 'multiplicity' makes *Jerusalem* a 'Gothic epic' (58). Kiel Straub revisits the discussion of Vala-turned-Rahab. This figure is 'in part a critique of [the] conservative aspirations of the Gothic Revival' (67), which Blake understands as aspirations of 'certainty and control' (68) and Straub calls 'basic Urizenic' strategies (73). Consequently, it is the continuity of terrible events – Rahab, who is '"Moral Virtue" and "Mystery Babylon the Great the Mother of Harlots"' (71), gets 'initiated into the service of Urizenic empire' (74) – that cause Gothic emotions in both Los and the reader (78-79). Claire Colebrook turns to the Kantian sublime to discuss point of view and absence of absolute experience in Blake. She frames her discussion of multiplying lines and voices with Deleuze's concept of '"incompossible" worlds' (86) and analyses the infinite 'Gothic structure of Blake's worlds' (88). Blake's counter-Gothic sublime, she concludes, creates a world where 'composition […] is not so much the capacity for delineation and difference, but for variation and indifference' (103).

Part II has chapters on 'misbegotten' bodies and Gothic conditions of corporeal existence. In Chapter 4, Jason Whittaker maps Blakean inspiration alongside a fascinating discussion of Lovecraft's influence on Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*. The film disappointed fans and critics (121, 124), but, as Whittaker shows, it is the Gothic potential of Scott's sources that enables a complex, Gothic relation between science and religion (113). It is the non-human and soon-to-be decapitated android David who captures Whittaker's attention: 'Unlike his immediate human creator, it is the posthuman android who is able to see the potential of heavenly host in the alien

dark angel rather than a source of guineas' (125). Moving from conceptual to physical horror, Lucy Cogan contextualizes the deformed bodies of Blake's creation myth through Burkean fear-mongering and William Hunter's obstetrics. These bodies are monstrous, due to their graphic explicitness, but they effect horror as well as parody. Cogan also compares Urizen's attitude towards corpses to Frankenstein's but shies away from calling Urizen, who is a 'monstrous living-corpse' (141), a Zombie. The implications are teasingly suggestive for the relationship between Blake's creator figures. Stephanie Codsi, on the other hand, makes a case for the theatricality of Blake's horror by focusing on the performativity of acts of dissection. She makes a case for satire and links back to *An Island in the Moon* as well as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Codsi contextualizes Blakean Gothic with Lewis's *The Monk*, Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Part III develops the Gothic body-theme through analyses of images and topographies. Peter Otto, in his 'archaeology of the present' (165), superimposes close readings of the scenes and modes of creation in plate 11 (copy A) from *Urizen*, plate 8 (copy B) from *Song of Los* and the frontispiece of *Europe*. He argues that Blake's combination of creation with violence is a Gothic response to the French Revolution, while suggesting that Blake considered the devastating impact of the guillotine (182). Focusing on the symbolism of 'sexualised [underground] settings' (190) Ana Elena González-Treviño re-reads *The Book of Thel* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* to uncover parallels between 'mystical threshold' moments (199) of Thel and Othoon and figures from German fairy tales, Greek myths as well as the Gothic 'damsel in distress' (195).

The chapters in Part IV home in on the Gothic treatment of self-formation, desire and sexuality. In Chapter 9 Mark Lussier presents Blake as utterly Gothic. Lussier theorizes Blake's Gothic aesthetics and its unconscious 'gaps' through Deleuze and Lacan as well as the Gothic's relationship with Romanticism. Lussier enables the dark, psychological undercurrents of Blake's visual imagination to surface in his wonderfully insightful interpretation of the title-page and frontispiece to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (230). Chapter 10 is on *Visions*, James Graham's electric celestial bed and horror. Connolly not only finds sexual aggression in Oothoon's Gothic victimhood, she also turns Oothon into an overly keen sex therapist. The resonances between Graham and Oothon's attitudes towards sexual liberation are striking and this is not the only revelation; Connolly's reading of Theotormon, 'the quietest of the poem's trio' (238), gives this character a diagnosis (impotence). Connolly's provocative re-examination of relationships in *Visions* shifts the blame from Bromion on to Oothoon, thus turning her into another mouthpiece of 'Romantic' ideas of sex and sexuality.

*William Blake's Gothic Imagination* is more than it promises to be – a 'major scholarly study focused on Blake's intersections with the Gothic' – it is a landmark in Blake scholarship. While many of us may be familiar with Blake's popular reception, reading Blake's art through the lens of the Gothic is a relatively new and rewarding critical undertaking.

*Sibylle Erle*
*Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln*

## **Heidi Thomson, *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper: The Morning Post and the Road to 'Dejection'*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2016. Pp. 274. £72.00. ISBN 9783319319773.**

In *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper*, Heidi Thomson analyzes Coleridge's life and writing between November 1799, when he established himself in London as a staff writer for Daniel Stuart's newspaper, *The Morning Post*, and October 1802, when he published 'Dejection: An

Ode' in the same newspaper on the 4th of October, the day of Wordsworth's marriage to Mary Hutchinson. Coleridge's relations during this period with the Wordsworths and the Hutchinsons have received a great deal of critical attention, but Thomson's premiss is original and revelatory. Rather than study a group of people, she here examines a collection of writings – Coleridge's epigrams, ballads, sentimental poems, satires, odes, translations, and political essays in the *Morning Post* – as a way to interrogate the underlying tensions of Coleridge's life at this time, in particular his alienation from and envy of Wordsworth, as well as his anguished love for Sara Hutchinson and his emotional withdrawal from his wife, Sara Coleridge. In Thomson's reading, Coleridge not only exploited the public forum of the newspaper for the airing of remarkably private grievances, but in doing so wrote some of his best poetry. Her narrative culminates in 1802 with 'Dejection', but on the way there she provides fascinating, insightful readings of any number of Coleridge's newspaper poems (including the 'Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie', the odes 'To Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire' and 'After Bathing in the Sea, Contrary to Medical Advice', as well as 'The Mad Monk'), persuasively arguing that Coleridge's popular newspaper poetry provides 'the clearest, most revealing indication of his private thoughts and emotions' (32).

Writing for the newspaper provided Coleridge with a 'socially sanctioned outlet for private despair about domestic and poetic matters' (21). He turned to the *Morning Post* almost compulsively during these years, Thomson argues, 'to publish matters of an extraordinarily sensitive personal nature in the unambiguously public space of the newspaper' (3). The story that she narrates here takes important bearings from Coleridge's increasingly strained relations with Wordsworth, notably during the preparation of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 (culminating in Wordsworth's rejection of 'Christabel'). Always overestimating the alignment of Wordsworth's interests with his own, Coleridge was repeatedly forced both to acknowledge that Wordsworth's (increasingly naturalistic) poetics were no longer commensurate with his own, and to face his nagging anxiety that his own poetic demise was related directly to 'Wordsworth's descent on him' (lamenting to Godwin in 1801 that 'the Poet is dead in me'; 122). The other major factor in Coleridge's life at this time was of course his tortured relationship with Sara Hutchinson, whom he had met in the fall of 1799 just before moving to London, and with whom he was very much in love. Coleridge requested Stuart to send the *Morning Post* to Sara Hutchinson, which allowed them to use the newspaper as a private conduit, not least because Sara would have read Coleridge's poetry in ways that would have eluded other readers. Thus it is that, for Thomson, Coleridge's contributions to the *Morning Post* inevitably turn upon 'his disaffection from his wife, his alienation from the Wordsworths, and his guilty happiness with Sara Hutchinson' (128-9) – respectively figures for Coleridge of doomed domesticity, poetic prowess, and frustrated desire.

Amongst many fine readings of Coleridge's poetry here – notably the analysis of the 'Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie' (the first of the 'Asra' poems) in chapter 3 and the clinching reading of 'Dejection' in chapter 9 – Thomson arguably makes her most original contribution in her analysis in chapters 6 and 7 of Coleridge's important relationship with Mary Robinson, his colleague at the *Morning Post* who became a close friend and ally in 1800, and whose *Lyrical Tales* he advocated for even as he was being erased from *Lyrical Ballads*. Thomson reads Coleridge's alliance with Robinson as 'both an antidote to and an advertisement of the dejection and rejection he experienced at the hands of the Wordsworths, and by extension also the Hutchinsons' (142). The central poems here are Coleridge's 'The Mad Monk', which Thomson positions as an immediate expression of Coleridge's 'disaffection from Wordsworth and hurt about the exclusion of "Christabel" from *Lyrical Ballads*' (145), and Robinson's own poems of 1800, the 'Ode to Derwent' and 'Mrs. Robinson to the Poet Coleridge', in which Robinson demonstrates her nuanced affinity for Coleridge's poetry.

Despite his marginalization by Wordsworth, 'Coleridge flourished as a poet, a very different poet from Wordsworth, during his *Morning Post* years' (236), a period during which he wrote some of his most popular poetry, and certainly poetry whose readership far outnumbered that of the *Lyrical Ballads*. This is Thomson's largest claim, one which she generously substantiates, in subtle and revealing readings of Coleridge's unduly neglected newspaper poetry – as well as of 'Dejection', which was itself, as Thomson reminds us, a newspaper poem.

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## Madeleine Callaghan, *Shelley's Living Artistry: Poems, Letters, Plays*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. Pp. 296. £75. ISBN 9781786940247.

Callaghan's single author study of Percy Bysshe Shelley is a sensitive and ranging account with three main strands. Firstly, it possesses a relatively self-conscious methodological commitment to neo-formalism. This is evident in some of its key critical interlocutors from Shelley scholarship – Michael O'Neill, Stuart Curran, Harold Bloom and Earl Wasserman to give but four – as well as the relative absence of certain preoccupations dominant in Romantic Studies today, such as political context, print culture and coterie. An astute observation on rhyme scheme, the snap of a couplet, the shape of verse, or an instance of intertextuality is never far away. Secondly, driven by her concern with the casting of life into art, Callaghan foregrounds the letters as points around which chapters come to be organised. Hence the pursuit of phantoms, as raised in a letter to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, leads into readings of *Alastor* and *Laon and Cyntha*, whilst a loaded exchange between Keats and Shelley frames her interpretation of *Adonais*. The third strand, although announced in that recurrent concern with life and art, is perhaps more oblique but arguably the most fundamental. I would suggest that this is, at heart, a book about the constitution and evolution of Shelley's authorial identity. Callaghan's interest in Shelley's relations (both real and poeticised) with other writers, the dramatization of proxy poet figures across the verse, and above all the various ways in which the private and the personal could be given literary expression continually reiterate this focus.

What emerges is a mobile, self-revising and deeply reflexive Shelley. This is not out of line with prior critical assessments: at times, the interpretations remind one of Jerrold E. Hogle's superb 1988 study *Shelley's Process*, although Callaghan gives relatively short shrift to psychoanalytic concepts, and indeed theoretically-inclined criticism more generally. Due to the book's commitment to neo-formalism, some of the most impressive readings come when language's ability to construct and deconstruct literary positions is at stake, and when language reaches a limit. One might consider here the interruption of Byronic-Shelleyan dialogue by the maniac's ravings in *Julian and Maddalo*, or the way that language's corrosive distortion by tyranny in *The Cenci* interrogates the utopian force of language implicit in *Prometheus Unbound*'s choral fragments. It would have been interesting to address this Shelleyan pessimism more insistently, as it marks a haunting and indeed perhaps unavoidable limit to the poetic achievement that Callaghan frequently cites and endorses.

It covers a very comprehensive range of material, allying with recent trends in Shelley scholarship in engaging overlooked elements of his oeuvre: there are important chapters here on the *Esdaile* and *Scrope Davies* notebooks, for instance. Sometimes the three strands mentioned above do tend to diverge, as readings pursue their own logic and partly lose sight of the letters which supply the chapters with their spurring principle. Equally, it is a shame that there was not

more systematic consideration of the epistolary as a rhetorical mode: the unique force of letter-writing is gestured at within individual examples, but no broader theorisation of the Romantic epistolary is given. In this context, more sustained attention to Shelley's verse-epistle *Letter to Maria Gisborne,* as well as consideration of other forms of occasional verse and poems addressed to friends, would have been fascinating extensions of the study's thesis. However, it is a valuable, ranging and deeply informed contribution, and this reader was left intrigued by what tensions and frictions would occur if Callaghan was to juxtapose Shelley's work with other models of how Romantic contemporaries translated life into art. To any reader sympathetic to neo-formalism, and indeed any reader sympathetic to Shelley (who can be as frustrating a poet as a brilliantly incandescent one), this study will repay attention.

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## O. Bradley Bassler, *Kant, Shelley and the Visionary Critique of Metaphysics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. 262. $79.99. ISBN 9783319772912.

Bassler explores how Immanuel Kant's thinking on the metaphysics and epistemology of sense experience opens philosophical and poetical doors to what he calls the parafinite. Unlike earlier metaphysical theories, distinctions between the finite and the infinite are not easily drawn when the mind synthetically unifies perceptual objects that remain radically indeterminate. Bassler traces a historical genealogy of post-Kantian extrapolations of this notion to mark out a new area in philosophy he calls paraphysics, where attempts to define the infinite in terms of the absolute are consistently outpaced by the indeterminate, yet constitutive nature of sense experience. Bassler considers such thinking to be a visionary critique of Kant's own more strict separation of the theoretical from the practical realms.

In the final section (which takes up about a quarter of the book) Bassler stages an encounter between Kant and Shelley which shows Shelley loosening Kant's prophylactic (34) separation of the noumenal and the phenomenal. The agon between Kant and Shelley problematises one reading of Kantian sublimity in Romantic poetry which stresses the role of the imagination to limit and contain the overbearing power of reason. This notion is represented through consideration of the work of Northrop Frye, Earl Wasserman and Harold Bloom. These are the only literary critical sources considered, as the aim of this book is admittedly rather one-sided – to see what Shelley can do for critical philosophy, rather than the other way around. Despite the overall success of this endeavour, one feels that the work of scholars like Ross Wilson, who have worked extensively on Shelley and post-Kantian thought, might have been productively addressed.

The earlier sections systematically work through various post-Kantian thinkers' responses to the question of whether the imagination is part of a faculty psychology which is ultimately beyond the experience of space and time or a way of negotiating them. The first two chapters analyse Kant's ideas in depth, discussing distinctions between the 'relative' and the 'absolute' parafinite. Kant's sublime is not relative to something else, but to *everything* else, so is absolutely, rather than relatively, parafinite. Chapter three concentrates on Leibniz's concept of sufficient reason, disambiguating the idea of what is requisite from what is necessary. When what is requisite is seen as courting the unknown and the indefinite then Kant's notion of 'self-positioning' (17) – the mind's locating of itself in external space – comes into its own. With a philosophical project more akin to Shelley's own, Peirce is shown to press on Kant's notion of the immediacy of experience, arguing that symbolic connections made between concepts like morality and freedom are implacably *mediate,* not indirect.

Chapter four continues this line of thought to explore continuities and discontinuities between Kant and Husserl, arguing that Husserl's ideas harbour a hidden commitment to the indefinite. The intentionality attributed to consciousness by Husserl may turn out to be a kind of intuitive process that, like Kant's phenomenal realm is regulative, rather than fully constitutive. Brouwer, Hilbert, Tarski, Wittgenstein and Frege are also discussed here. Chapter five further explores the idea presented in the first two chapters that Kant's critical philosophy is 'layered' (21) by various levels of possible figurative and symbolic experience. This, Bassler argues, can complicate Kant's own split between the theoretical and the practical in ever more pragmatic ways.

Chapter six presents analyses of Shelley's poems and his unconscious grappling with the absolute parafinite, via comparison to Milton's and Blake's more obviously theological thought-patterns. Particularly in *The Triumph of Life*, Bassler makes astute arguments which differentiate between 'rhetorical figuration' and what he calls Shelley's 'locative poetics', (202) which engage with a 'real physics of motion' (199) rather than with what has become familiar to literary scholars as the deconstructive interchangeability of figures. Bassler also presents the intriguing idea that Shelley did not address the parafinite directly in his work because he was psychologically constrained by an 'epistemological perfectionism' (191). He wanted to plumb the depths of the indefinite and construct a totalised vision of creation and knowledge in the manner of Milton and Blake. But his poetry strains in another direction: particularly through the figure of Demogorgon (*Prometheus Unbound*), and in the rushing chariot of *The Triumph of Life*, Bassler argues that Shelley's poetry attests that the indefinite by definition cannot be conceptually delimited.

Having been allowed to test the limits of a philosophical tradition based on logical positivism Shelley's work remains a 'poetic pedigree' (181) for the kind of post-Kantian thinking Bassler has identified, rather than a mode of philosophical knowledge in its own right. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating and insightful argument that literature might help critical philosophy out of its current impasse by showing it its own historical conditions of possibility: allowing it to reflect upon its own modes of self-representation, as they have been constructed by the genealogies to which it is indebted.

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## Roger Whitson, *Steampunk and Nineteenth-Century Digital Humanities: Literary Retrofuturisms, Media Archaeologies, Alternate Histories*. New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2017. Pp. xiv + 229. £115.00. ISBN 9781138859500.

Departing from Veronica Alfano and Andrew Stauffer's *Virtual Victorians* (2015), Roger Whitson's book is a timely, conceptually ambitious, innovative study that stresses the usefulness of steampunk in exposing the natural and historical processes built into digital humanities. By employing steampunk both as an aesthetic and a methodology, the book shows 'how assemblages of nineteenth-century literature and history are repurposed into conjectural and artistic forms of digital humanities practice' (23). Whitson adopts non-human, posthuman and materialist approaches to media archaeology to argue that the nineteenth century is not just a historical period, but 'a digital system whose discrete elements are decontextualized, remixed, remade, appropriated, and otherwise transformed to serve various political, cultural, and technological purposes' (7). As this compound definition suggests, the steampunk mode is one of layering, negotiation and entanglement. Similarly, the book itself stratifies its contents in reordered configurations and dynamic juxtapositions, discussing an array of genres and media:

fiction, essays, technical descriptions, painting, photography, graphic novels, exhibition items, emails, video recording, social media, and video games.

Whitson's approach gravitates towards a convergence between technology and the counterfactual. The opening chapter probes into historicist perspectives, focusing on William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's iconic steampunk novel *The Difference Engine* (1990), whose narrative suggests 'a form of alternate history that simulates computational time-criticality' (39). The novel's numerous iterations 'warp the historicity of the nineteenth and 'uncover the non-human disregard of human-centered history' (47). Gibson and Sterling, Whitson demonstrates, critique Charles Babbage's homogenous temporality, embodied in his difference engine, a project expounded in *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise* (1837).

Chapter 2 explores counter-factuality through a postcolonial lens, pitching into Chinese steampunk. In ekphrastic readings of images and designs by steampunk artist James Ng, and a meticulous analysis of Ken Liu's silkpunk novel *The Grace of Kings* (2016), Whitson reimagines counter-factual technologies, speculating how alternate steampunk histories might evolve had steampunk not originally been a European phenomenon. Whitson turns the 'what-if' perspective around by examining Isabella Bird's travel photography that depicts Imperial China in ruinous decay (1896), as it reflects anxiety about the demise of the British Empire. Informed by 'intersectionality', the chapter at its close considers Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda's lush steampunk graphic novel *Monstress* (2015–) to showcase the 'complexities' of 'multicultural techniques' (96).

Whitson delves into ecocriticism and time criticality in Chapter 3 to challenge James Hutton's obsession with human centrality and superiority in his model of geological 'deep time' in *Theory of the Earth* (1788). Whitson reveals the latent nonhuman temporality that ruptures Hutton's narrative: the earth is a 'giant ancient corpse' whose crust is built from the accumulation of dead marine fauna, and thus it is 'a record of non-human experiences' (104). The planet then is perceived as a digital ecology, which is 'akin to a pixel on a computer screen computing a larger and larger picture' (106). In Whitson's razor-sharp analysis, China Miéville's fantasy novel *Iron Council* (2004) depicts the inaccessibility of this macro-picture. The novel is fascinated by the nexuses between deep time and how the earth is sculpted by human activity through golemetry, 'a counterfactual manipulation of deep time' (110). Whitson also gives critical attention to the Squint/Opera 'Flooded London' exhibition project (2008), which imagines nonhuman, post-apocalyptic ecological systems.

Chapter 4 juxtaposes the preceding chapter as it moves from non-human counterfactual geological temporality to post-human counterfactual human labour and industrialism. Whitson scrutinises Friedrich Engels's theory of labour as co-dependent with evolutionary processes, focusing on the human hand, which evolved to facilitate ever more efficient skilled, manual work. These large-scale invisible forces that drive labour are aptly explored in Neal Stephenson's layered novel *Diamond Age* (1995), in which nanotechnology is conducive to 'a giant network of global labor sustaining the illusion and privilege of immaterial labor' (140). Stephenson's dialectical nature of technological and ecological systems, Whitson adduces, finds fertile soil in the repurposed objects of the so-called Maker Culture, represented by steampunk engineer and YouTube persona Jake Von Slatt.

Lastly, Whitson turns to what he terms 'queer steampunk fandom' (159). Here he investigates the world of steampunk communities and subcultures through conversations with influential cosplayers and bloggers (such as Ashley Rogers and Diana Pho). These conversations reveal that steampunk fandom offers a liberating, fluid, utopian space that resists heteronormative models. They constitute an alternate practice to traditional methods of academic scholarship of Victorian culture, thus mirroring the book's central argument. But it makes us notice that, ironically, *Steampunk* itself is in the conservative academic genre of the monograph. Yet as Whitson claims '[o]ur lives exist in what seems to be a jigsaw puzzle of different

[technological] forms of time' (63). This compositeness is traced in the very cavernous architecture of this study whose manifold assemblage of perspectives rehearses steampunk methodologies and enables reverse-engineering of steampunk temporalities. The book is a significant contribution to the field of Digital Humanities.

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## Bo Earle, *Post-Personal Romanticism: Democratic Terror, Prosthetic Poetics, and the Comedy of Modern Ethical Life*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2017. Pp. xiii + 212. £65.00. ISBN 9780814213520.

Bo Earle's book discusses some major Romantic poems in relation to the current state of literary theory. Both the interpretation of the poetry and the exposition of the theory are interestingly problematized by their need, as Earle sees it, to take account of the uncertainties of the contemporary environment in which both take place. He begins with a shout of protest against the debasement of American public discourse, in which comedy TV is a more reliable source of news than official networks or Presidential pronouncements. He then extrapolates backwards historically to suggest that comedy is the form taken by tragedy in modern mass society. Such comedy is not the theodicy of Dante or the dystopia of Balzac; it is more a cosmic comic reversal. Insofar as Romanticism anticipates, it secretes a post-personal understanding of the fragility of ideas of the individual, and so a re-functioning of the crowd or masses' own delusion of personal agency. This is Tim Morton's environmental subject of Romanticism put to work in deconstructive mode.

This densely-written, sometimes dazzling book, eschews insight to provide a raft for the inadvertent. There are different ways of getting round Romantic ideology. One is systematically to dissolve the particularity essential to aesthetic experience in a general discursive context. The trick is to preserve the connection that makes the translation plausible. Earle, contrarily, highlights the arbitrariness involved. Another is to stress the unrestricted metaphoricity of poetry, defined by post-Kantian philosophers, which allows it to reposition itself in non-aesthetic discourses. Poetry becomes a transferrable *Poesie*, whose idea, as Benjamin saw, was prose. Earle's book is a version of the former, systems solution, but one whose introduction of the contemporary wild card of the Anthropocene recomposes our world as a comedy in which every salvific move, since wrong, is necessarily comic.

This kind of reading of poetry continues the tradition of being against interpretation; it is a repetitive drama of continual abstinence from textual consumption within an eschatological ecology in which more is always less. Earle's work is housed within the comfortable hotel of American academic Romantic commentary on a selection of canonical texts. When other protagonists grow too definite, their untruth to an 'irreducible contingency' pays Earle's critical bills, giving him something to say. This means that he mustn't say too much himself if he is to remain professionally solvent. He must be the official receiver of the critical businesses of the others his reading claims to bankrupt. The results, it must be said, are often entertaining, instructive in spotting blindness, and never attempt to trump. The tenacious virtuosity in reading others is as absorbing as anything in the heady days of deconstructive play, but also is loaded with ultimate seriousness – for what has more gravity than the end of the world?

Like Hegel's unhappy consciousness, though, one longs for the real world and resists the idea that the Anthropocene has so queered reality that to want anything that is other than a nature without nature is nostalgia. The Reason with which Hegel replaced the individuals of master, stoic, sceptic and beautiful soul is now lodged in a discourse of loss obliged to mourn its own

'depletion'. The only consolation is the companionship of the bankrupt and bereaved. The book keeps unwavering faith with its premise. Earle systematically pulls the plug on everyone under the rubrics of Blake, Byron, Shelley and Keats. All are read in part to produce a compulsive bafflement of their larger projects, defeats that must never themselves achieve a compensatory certainty but must continually empty themselves of their own content. Adorno is occasionally allowed to shadow such negativity, but even his rescue of a minimal freedom goes under the sea of contingency like all the rest.

Maybe this is the kind of criticism we deserve, given the mess we've got ourselves into globally? In the age of an intensified consciousness of the Anthropocene, we can – must – only see that we cannot see clearly, with the rider that this incoherence itself limns a position of incoherence not a diagnosis. The discipline required to press every example of this critique to its (non-) conclusion is perhaps the only thing that undeniably survives in such a critical end-game. Nothing to say, but on we go, saying it for this not to signify failure. The reader alternates between thinking this book Beckettian, or decadent. We are left taking pleasure in the pictures of themselves that each shipwreck of an author's work and its reception throw up. Blake's 'infant smile', like Rilke's, is ineffable. Byron's 'sad eye' is as astonishingly vagrant as Bataille's. Shelley's 'viral prophecy' means that the 'one great poem' looks like a rhizomatic literary blight. As Keats's 'lame flock' suggests, as in all Earle's case-studies, Romantic introspection is shown actually to negotiate the crowd that rushes in to fill its solipsistic expansions. But these chapters are pictures, not theses, and so preserve their unreliability as rigorously as did Paul de Man's Schlegelian *Schwebung*, or hovering, between the literal and the figurative. So we can all get post-personal, but only to produce the latest person's highly personal criticism.

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## Jane Austen, *The Beautifull Cassandra: A Novel in Twelve Chapters*. Afterword by Claudia L. Johnson. Artwork by Leon Steinmetz. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. Pp. 72. £13.99. ISBN 9780691181530.

Reading *Love and Freindship* (1790) nearly a century ago, Virginia Woolf remarked the quality of the teenaged Jane Austen's sentences. Princeton University Press's edition of *The Beautifull Cassandra* (composed ca. 1787-90) brings fresh attention to the sentences and other formal units of Austen's prose, especially her chapters. *The Beautifull Cassandra* typically takes up a few pages in a larger collection of Austen's youthful writings. The first edition to present Austen's self-described 'novel' as such, in its own volume with a complement of artwork by Leon Steinmetz and an afterword by Claudia L. Johnson, gives us something rare: a Jane Austen novel that feels new.

Johnson's afterword provides an accessible introduction to general readers and persuasive critical insight to a scholarly audience. In it Johnson explores the significance of 'Austen's own choice' (not paginated) of genre along with the author's interest in the formal conventions of eighteenth-century fiction. As Johnson shows, the concerns of this miniature novel are not something that Austen grows out of as she develops her mature work, but part of larger, career-long concerns. The combination of Austen's text, Steinmetz's illustrations, and Johnson's afterword results in a compelling and beautiful gift book of unique ambition. This edition offers us a chance to revise the way we think about the Austen canon.

*The Beautifull Cassandra* itself is, in Johnson's words, a 'masterpiece of novelistic minimalism', complete with a succinct dedication to Cassandra Austen and twelve chapters, each from one to four sentences. The heroine, Cassandra, liberates a bespoke bonnet from her parents'

shop and careers through town gobbling ice cream, paying for nothing, and walking away from the people she encounters. Johnson briefly offers one possible explanation for the novel's pointedly short chapters – that 'foreshortening her chapters almost to the breaking point' might send up the 'prolixity' of Austen's contemporaries – in favor of expanding on another. Austen 'eschew[s] grandiose adventure' in this 'first novel to […] fully embrace the uneventful'.

This lack of significant event is, Johnson observes, both an object of derision for Austen's critics and the basis for her 'artistic originality' throughout her career. It is also the basis of Austen's comedy; she 'thwart[s our] assumptions' that, as in most novels, something will happen in favor of 'more forward movement'. So a tense encounter with Maria in Chapter 9, which seems to promise a confrontation, yields one of many quick exits. This momentum, subdivided into equally quick chapters, draws readers' attention to the formal units of fiction – to plot, chapter, and sentence.

Since images change the rhythm of these units, one might react to the addition of Steinmetz's artwork with trepidation, in case it might arrest Austen's spectacular momentum. But Steinmetz's quick lines and textured brushstrokes have a momentum of their own that complements that of Austen's prose. Insofar as they slow the reader down in the act of looking, it is in the best way possible. These pauses reinforce those of the chapter divisions, further encouraging readers to notice Austen's 'smart fun' (in Johnson's words) with them.

Finally, the modernity and minimalism of the artwork reminds readers that both art and text are 'masterpieces of economy'. We might usefully consider this combination of text and image in terms of its overlap with the recent picture books for adults trend, the conventions of which this edition reverses. In its current iteration, the picture book for adults combines the verbal and pictorial style of a children's book with adult themes, as in Avery Monsen and Jory John's *All My Friends Are Dead* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010). Steinmetz's images, by contrast, are both unmistakably playful and unmistakably grownup. In this way, they promote one of this edition's, and Johnson's, central claims. *The Beautifull Cassandra* and other youthful writings, though 'disparaging[ly]'counted as Austen's 'juvenilia', are anything but juvenile. This edition makes the case that these writings deserve their place, without minimization or dismissal, within the Austen canon.

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## Ainsley McIntosh, ed., *Marmion: a Tale of Flodden Field.* The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. Pp. 486. £90. ISBN 9781474425193.

As interest in Walter Scott rises, both scholars and general readers are likely to turn to what initially made him famous: his poetry. It was his poetry, not his anonymously published novels, which established him as a member of the early nineteenth century's Scottish literati. However, reputable scholarly editions of his poetry are lacking. The Edinburgh Edition of Scott's Poetry (EEWSP) of which *Marmion: a Tale of Flodden Field* is the first volume to be published, seeks to rectify this. The EEWSP is a companion series to the recently-completed Edinburgh Edition of the Waverly Novels (EEWN) and follows a similar format. It aims to restore the text of the poems, along with their corresponding notes, to that which Scott intended. They also provide detailed essays justifying the editorial decisions made, the history and availability of manuscripts, drafts and editions, and a list of emendations, thus allowing the reader to recover other readings of the poems. The series editor is Professor Alison Lumsden, who worked on the EEWN and is currently Chair in English at the University of Aberdeen; *Marmion*'s editor is Dr

Ainsley McIntosh who is an Advisory Editor for the EEWSP and affiliated with the Walter Scott Research Centre at the University of Aberdeen.

The volume opens with a short 'General Introduction' to the series by Lumsden. Lumsden reminds the reader of the 'dazzling' (ix) success of Scott's poetry and its impact on the literary scene, and posits that the lack of a scholarly edition may be one of the reasons why it has been overlooked by academia. She then provides a justification of the choice of the base text for the poems. Unlike in the EEWN when the 'the first fully articulated version' (xi), usually the first edition, was chosen as a base text, the EEWSP recognises that Scott continued to engage creatively with his poems after publication, and thus chooses a later edition, when 'the continuing process of adjustment and augmentation more or less ceases' (xii). McIntosh explains this in detail in relation to *Marmion* in the 'Essay on the Text.' She chronologically describes the different versions of the poem, starting with Scott's earliest references to it in his correspondence, and finishing with the posthumous 1833-34 edition. She justifies her choice of the third edition as a base text arguing that this represents the culmination of what she terms 'socialisation' (308), that is the process of mediating his text through discussion with readers. The third edition, McIntosh argues, marks the end of this process of discussion and emendation. However, during socialisation the text simultaneously deteriorates, and thus, the edition also seeks to correct mistakes which entered the text between manuscript form and third edition.

The first half of the volume presents the poem as Scott intended; the text of the poem contains Scott's short footnotes, and his longer notes are presented at the end. The second half of the volume includes the editorial notes. Following McIntosh's 'Essay on the Text' is the 'Emendation List' which details the differences between this edition and the third edition; a page on 'End-of-line Hyphens'; a 'Historical Note' which sets the text in its context and outlines Scott's practice of dealing with history; 'Explanatory Notes' which aim to 'identify places, historical events, and people, Scott's sources, and all quotations and references; to explain proverbs; and to translate difficult or obscure language' (367); and a 'Glossary' of words which are dialectical, archaic, technical, or are used in a different way than they usually are today.

The EEWSP's *Marmion* is a clear and scholarly edition of Scott's 1808 poem. As with the EEWN, the reader can be confident in the rigorous editorial process, and can approach the poem as Scott, not Lockhart, would have intended. McIntosh's notes provide detailed information on the editorial decisions she has made and thus grant an interested reader the ability to evaluate the emendations. The clear presentation of the text, the historical background given, and the explanatory notes and glossary, make the text accessible to all. Rejecting Lockhart's decision on Scott's notes returns the text to Scott's relatively reader-friendly approach. On the other hand, the edition recognises that fewer emendations are necessary with the poetry than with the novels; the text of the poem itself reaches the reader in a very similar form to earlier editions, making the need for a scholarly edition less pressing than it was with the novels.

*Marmion* is the first of ten volumes of the EEWSP to be published. It restores the text to the way Scott intended, and provides the reader with pertinent background information. Therefore, it is a welcome addition to Scott scholarship.

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## John Barnard, ed., *21st-Century Oxford Authors: John Keats*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 720. £95. ISBN 9780199660872.

John Keats is a poet who has been extremely well served by his editors. In relatively modern times, volumes by Hyder E. Rollins, Miriam Allott, Jack Stillinger, John Barnard, Nicholas Roe, Elizabeth Cook, Jeffrey Cox, Grant Scott and others have given us meticulously edited and annotated versions of the poetry and letters. John Barnard, already the editor of a fine *Complete Poems* and an equally distinguished *Selected Letters*, has in this latest edition managed triumphantly to reshape significantly our understanding of Keats's writings.

He does so principally through two things: first, the quality of his editing of individual works, which displays a pervasive care and accuracy; second, through his deployment of one of the key weapons in the editor's armoury, that is, decisions about the ordering of his or her materials. In keeping with the – to my mind, invaluable – overall aim of the series (as the editor in it of a forthcoming Coleridge volume I should declare an interest), Barnard prints the writings in chronological order of publication (where that occurred) or composition (as is the case with unpublished writings, including some of the poems and all of the annotations and letters).

The result is continually to sharpen one's understanding of sequence and juxtaposition. I found it instructive to have drawn to my attention the fact that journal publication of the two Elgin Marbles sonnets, in the second of which the poet is overwhelmed by 'an undescribable feud' (10) of feelings, preceded the publication of the 1817 *Poems*, with, in *Sleep and Poetry*, the quasi-sculptural depiction of 'poesy' as 'the supreme of power; / 'Tis might half slumbering on its own right arm' (236-7). Aesthetic storm here ushers in Apollonian calm. We meet the *Poems* version of 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' having already encountered, much as Keats's contemporaries would have encountered, the poem's initial periodical publication in December 1816. Barnard's decision to print both versions means that we can watch the poem's evolving life, noticing for example the key change (in both senses) in line 7 from 'Yet could I never judge what men could mean' to 'Yet did I never breathe its pure serene'.

Again, the ordering reminds one that composition of the inventive imaginings of *Endymion* (finally published in late April or early May 1818) accompanies letter after letter in which Keats breaks new speculative ground about the nature and purpose of poetry. The letters are familiar and justly famous, yet one reads them with refreshed eyes and ears when they're put intimately into connection with the poetry. On 8 October 1817, Keats, with *Endymion* in mind, asserts: 'Besides a long Poem is a test of Invention which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry, as Fancy is the Sails, and Imagination the Rudder' (92); on 22 November, he writes to Bailey that 'The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream – he awoke and found it truth' (96); in late December, he formulates his notion of '*Negative Capability*' (103). It is amusing to see this highpoint of Romantic poetics immediately followed by a sonnet 'To Mrs Reynolds's Cat', in which living in 'uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts' (103) takes the form of impish questioning: 'How many mice and Rats hast in thy days / Destroy'd?' (2-3), where the enjambed verb falls with mock-heroic yet proto-Darwinian force. It is also stimulating to note that the next item is Keats's marginalia to his copy of Shakespeare's First Folio in which Shakespeare's imaginative gift with language receives delighted praise, as when the phrase 'maturity blowne up' from *Troilus and Cressida* elicits the following hyper-sensitive comment: 'One's very breath when leaning over these Pages is held for fear of blowing this line away – as easily as the gentlest breeze Robs dandelions of their fleecy Crowns' (105).

Such a sentence is literary criticism as a mode of prose poetry, a mode apparent also in the marginalia to *Paradise Lost*. This marginalia was also undertaken in the months before the publication of *Endymion*, reminding one that serious engagement with Milton took place some while before Keats turned his creative energies towards *Hyperion*. An attractive feature of the volume, as of the series, is the inclusion of photographs of title pages and other materials,

including, here, the first page of Book IV of Milton's epic, with Keats's comments on it, beginning 'A friend of mine says this Book has the finest opening of any' (133), a reminder that Keats's creative development owes much to his relations with others (here Bailey or Dilke). That these relations could be fraught as well as benign is brought out by Barnard's discussion of the decision, against Keats's initial wishes, to include *Hyperion* in the 1820 volume. One assumes that Keats saw the poem in proofs of the volume, and to that degree acquiesced in the decision to include it, and, overall, Barnard's judgement that 'The relation between K[eats] and his editors was a fruitful one based on collaboration and negotiation' (610) carries conviction.

That comment typifies the excellent good sense and balance evident in the succinct, highly apposite annotation. John Barnard also supplies a compelling Introduction, which notes (for example) that 'An impatience to move on to the next challenge is a recurrent feature of Keats's writing life' (xxviii); a detailed Chronology; a note on the volume's editorial principles and procedures; a guide to classical names; and pertinent information about the poet's correspondents and acquaintances. The volume is an editorial tour-de-force that breathes revivifying energy into our grasp of Keats's writings as it 'creates' what the editor calls 'a double time scheme', placing 'the poetry by which Keats was known to the reading public in his lifetime within the extensive biographical context provided by his unpublished poems and letters' (xxxv-xxxvi). It is an editorial achievement of the first importance.

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# Spotlight: Romanticism, Landscape, and the Environment

## Julia M. Wright, *Representing the National Landscape in Irish Romanticism*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014. Pp. xxxii + 331. $39.95. ISBN 9780815633532.

This book examines the role of the Irish landscape in constructing Irish national identity in romantic literature. Wright argues that Ireland, as articulated in such key texts as John Leslie's *Killarney*, Thomas Moore's *Melodies* and Lady Morgan's *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*, is 'neither insular nor affective but nationally significant precisely because of the leading edge of what we now term globalization', that sought to position Ireland in a 'concertedly international' context (x). She draws this thread from the United Irishman William Drennan's 1790s poems through to the Italian politician Camille de Cavour's strange 1845 *Considerations on the Present State and Future Prospects of Ireland*, works that negatively position Ireland against the rational might of Great Britain. Highly impressive in its detailed, and mostly convincing, analysis of many carefully selected texts, this book is of inestimable value to scholars for its meticulous tracing of 'the multiple, and strategic, positionings of Ireland geographically and […] narratively' (237) in a romantic period that stretches from 1770 to 1845. In Irish topographical verse, as the author rightly notes, 'the landscape registers the ongoing pressure of historical forces' which are 'economic, cultural or colonial' (4). This distinguishes it from the English tradition, which Wright characterises as one 'solidifying a static framework' if bearing its own 'fractures and shifts' (4).

Wright also works to place Ireland in the wider geographic frame of the north Atlantic, arguing that John Leslie's 1772 poem *Killarney* served to position that seminal landscape as a stable outpost of Great Britain and a suitable staging post for colonial excursions. Lady Morgan's *Glorvina* and William Drennan's *Glendalloch* are well-plumbed for the larger scales of geopolitical intent, if not the smaller ones. Minor geographic errors (Killarney is not a 'seaport') indicate that a greater spatial familiarity might complicate aspects of Wright's overall narrative. Yet these are minor quibbles – the precise and careful tracking of such turns and swerves in each site's textual genealogy is Wright's great achievement.

Yet the landscape is in itself also an artistic construct. Many of the landscapes discussed were not immobile tracts of land. They were significantly redesigned and reframed during the romantic period, responding to the tourist's (and owner's) gaze in their orientation, layout and representation. Scholars such as John Dixon Hunt and John Barrell have long argued that to analyse the topographical tradition in literature it is necessary to engage closely with the 'lie' of the land itself – and that its representation is fundamentally a confluence of word, image and landscape design. The ascendancy of Killarney and Glendalough was arguably first accomplished by published images. Likewise, the ascendancy of ruins in such topographical poems as Drennan's *Glendalloch* was first established by the nascent discipline of archaeology and the lists and drawings of such publications as Francis Grose's 1791 *Antiquities of Ireland*. Images of Killarney – maps, paintings, prints are complicit in any poetry it inspired while the post-1776 transatlantic United Irishmen were steeped in the symbolic power of Rousseau's suburban garden at Chambéry and the high peaks of the Alps.

Descriptions of Killarney, Glendalough and other such sites, as any perusal of the travel literature quickly reveals, also soon became clichéd. In a three-dimensional map of Killarney produced for the tourist trade in the 1840s the site is overloaded with high crosses, waterfalls, colleens and ruined chapels. Missing from the book is this legacy of the cliché and its inhibiting impact on the creation of new art forms. How were new versions of the Killarney 'national tale' interpreted in such a clichéd context? Did its translation to other sites and settings affect the

perception of the original? By the early nineteenth century, the aesthetic supremacy of sublime landscape also made the relative power of nations difficult to map precisely. If the ascendant landscape is the untamed upper lake of Killarney how can it represent a neat resolution of colonial power relations? If the edge is more beautiful than the centre, where does that leave the metropole? This book 'begins to trace these lines of Irish literary history', by inspiring more questions than it answers but also by asking many that have not previously been considered.

One observation about this book is that everything – landscapes, people and journeys – appears exceptional, ambitious and very large in scale. The mundane normality of much Irish landscape rhetoric of the period, often couched as 'improvement' – where to plant turnips, how to breed a stallion and which length of lease is best – is somewhat absent. This is perhaps the character of romanticism – a heightened hyperreality of transatlantic and geopolitical significance. Wright conclusively proves that 'Romantic Ireland' was designed to resonate across national and global scales but the more myopic, local scale is less represented and may contain such seeds as might fruitfully ground the analysis in the future.

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## Thomas H. Ford, *Wordsworth and the Poetics of Air: Atmospheric Romanticism in a Time of Climate Change*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 269. £75. ISBN 9781108424950.

In his prose and poetry, Wordsworth compares language to 'the air we breathe' and the Imagination to 'an unfather'd vapour'. He was fascinated by the 'smokeless air' of London, the 'misty air' and the 'hovering clouds' of the Isle of Man. From the 'wreathes of smoke' to the 'corresponding mild creative breeze', the poet locates inspiration as he 'wandered lonely as a cloud'. Wordsworth's proven interests in the poetics of meteorological phenomena anticipate this book-length study of Wordsworth's atmospheric or aerial poetics to be a valuable addition to the current Romantic scholarship.

Despite the emphasis on Wordsworth and air in the main title, Ford employs the conception of 'atmosphere' as the central locus of the book. Ford's study of Romantic aerial writing establishes the atmosphere as 'the primary medium of human perception and communication – and indeed life' (52), and as 'a language for conceiving what literature and science shared' (5). Based on the atmospheric 'qualities of indeterminacy, modifiability, vagueness, suspension and internal heterogeneity' (204), Ford proposes the challenges of differentiating between 'medium and message, breath and voice, literality and metaphor, the non-living and the living, nonhuman objects and human subjects' (198). Ford's book contextualises the Romantic transformations of the cultural and textual semantics of 'atmosphere' by tracing the historical emergence of atmospheric lexica from its first appearance in the late 1770s to our contemporary recognition of the language of anthropogenic climate changes. As a response to historicist and new historicist arguments, Ford establishes 'historical reflexivity' (18) or a totalising 'atmospheric sense of history' (76) as the key characteristics that distinguish Romantic weather poetics from aerial writings before the late eighteenth-century.

The first chapter opens with Ford's interpretation of M. H. Abrams's 'The Correspondent Breeze' (1957), a seminal examination of the poetic weather of Romanticism. Chapters 2 to 4 examine a specific form of communicative mediation or intervention with the idea of 'atmospheric vagueness' (97) or 'mobility' (96). With reference to metaphysical and theological theorisations of matter in aerial terms, chapter 2 explicates the suspended atmospheric interstate between the endurance and ephemerality of industrial history in Wordsworth's 'self-consuming'

(94) inscription writings. Dedicating a significant section of chapter 3 to Goethe's meteorological modification of translation, and of chapter 4 to Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Ford brings together the fields of meteorology, language, and aesthetic experiences by the indeterminacy of atmospheric Romanticism. Ford's contextualisation of the paradoxical ambiguity of atmospheric aesthetics and science culminates in chapter 5, where he provides a reading of the 'aerial environment' (154) in Wordsworth's 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey'. Ford attempts to understand poetry as an atmospheric modification of prose by examining the communicative and performative function of Wordsworth's metrically-patterned breathings and suspended voice. With reference to Keats's conceptual association of mist with mystery and the unknowing, alongside his observation of the 'atmospheric chamber of poetic experience' (154), the chapter draws together the field of post-revolutionary radical medicine, meteorology, and literary history. In his conclusion, Ford evaluates the role of Romantic textual atmosphere as a representation of both historical continuity and discontinuity.

This book provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Romantic atmospheric discourses by engaging with a diverse range of subjects, such as meteorology, metaphysics, aesthetics, linguistics, translation, medical pneumatics, theology, politics, philosophy, media theory, and print culture. Ford's wide repertoire of references, however, obscures his focus on Wordsworth's poetry and poetics in general. Out of the five main chapters, two of them have no specific mentioning of Wordsworth or his works. Even Ford's minimal attention to the close readings of texts is shared among his analysis of other Romantic aerial figures. Ford's commentary on Wordsworth's writings mostly consists of locating the poet's employment of atmospheric language; more might have been done to highlight the unique significance of this atmospheric approach to our understanding of particular Wordsworthian passages. Moreover, Ford's almost synonymous use of various meteorological terms and phenomena, such as air and atmosphere, weather and climate, runs contra to his intention of approaching Romantic literary characteristics through actual scientific concepts and connotations. Overall, Ford's meticulous effort in contextualising the various ambiguities and paradoxes that govern the historical conception of atmosphere engages rewardingly with current ecological and eco-critical discussions to open up new avenues of atmospheric inquiry in Romantic literature and history.

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## David Higgins, *British Romanticism, Climate Change, and the Anthropocene – Writing Tambora*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Pp 142. £49.99. ISBN 9783319678931.

The Palgrave Pivot series is renowned for modest, handsome titles, offering fresh and innovative research from writers wishing to develop their disciplines in accessible and informative ways. *Writing Tambora* is a good example of where literary criticism can go as we reboot our discipline to make it relevant to the ensuing sixth great extinction in which there will be no books and no humans to read them. David Higgins both clarifies the contemporary context for reading historical texts, and demonstrates a sophisticated balance between traditional close reading and more innovative critical practices that have come to us via the environmental humanities.

*Writing Tambora* refers to an ecocritical turn in Romantic studies in 1996 to ground and to legitimate the more innovative, textual scholarship that Higgins mobilizes with allusion to new materialism, extinction and climate change. The resultant literary critical method in Higgins's study is the sum of two vectors: one reads a climate crisis (the Tambora eruption of 1815) as 'a textual catastrophe' (2); the other attempts to square Romantic ideology with

Anthropocene studies. The former alerts the reader to Higgins' interest in environmental rhetoric; the latter anchors the study in terms familiar to Romanticists. The human capacity to shape the world, and our vulnerability to elemental forces we cannot control; these tired intellectual ideas are fortunately put to the test and animated by the paradox of the Anthropocene: a species-wide global agency that obscures our inevitable extinction. Higgins's first textual exhibit comes late to the book (page 29 of 142pp); however, it is rich and ripe for his idiosyncratic analysis: 'As every untrodden path affords some new incitement to the inquisitive mind, so we may look for much in the various branches of Natural History' (29) – these are the presumed words of Thomas Stamford Raffles writing on the Tambora event in the *Transactions of the Batavian Society*, one arm of the British colonising project of the nineteenth century with a history in eighteenth-century Dutch culture. For Higgins, Raffles's sense that literacy for localised natural history would lead to more productive colonies can only be placed alongside indigenous readings of the eruption within a 'totalising, and disinterested narrative' (33); Raffles' allusions to Milton's description of the sublime – 'In dim Eclipse disastrous twilight sheds' – draws attention to the ways eyewitness accounts are mediated by metanarrators, how natural atmospheres veil individual experience, and why colonial texts should be read alongside meteorological phenomena (in which they are enmeshed but seek to escape). Knowledge, technology and the comprehension of alienating local conditions take centre stage in Higgins's second chapter that critiques attempts to exert and to encode representational control. Chapter three places us once more in proximity to Mont Blanc, Byron, Shelley and a 'concern with the fragility of human dwelling within a potentially violent universe' (59), now understood as a textual ecology that repeats key images and tropes. [Q] What is new in Higgins' study? [A] Emphases on the desolating power of ice, the finitude of the human species, cosmic space and global cooling.

Such emphases are found within the 'dwelling-place' of Shelley's *Mont Blanc*. Our dwelling plight—to be in this world and do no harm—is not simply a question of connection or interconnection; it is partly a question of our *sense* of how we are connected is shared with others, and how this practice of sharing shapes our feelings. Drawing on Michael O'Neill's reading of Shelley's poem, Higgins reads the syntax of *Mont Blanc* as binding species into a shared ecosystem but with separate destinies. Whether Shelley's poem demonstrates antiquated anthropocentrism or proto-Anthropocene philosophy is not at stake here; the 'response to environmental change' is what Higgins invites us to consider, with all the difficulty this raises in our period of great change, instability and insecurity as to the fate of the 'race of man' (67-68).

*Writing Tambora* insists there is value in historical scholarship that teases out the politics and poetics of the dialectic between material events and creative practice. The Anthropocene invites us to think in deep time and decentre the human; Higgins refers to geological events and couples their meaning to experience at the human scale. Higgins's study offers valuable and instructive examples of the ways catastrophe is rhetorically produced and how the sources of our literary heritage mediate human-material interdependencies. We are reminded that the dynamic relation between organism and environment exist as a socio-ecological nexus, where our world is viewed in general terms as a series of connections between cultural practices and evolution. This reality check is perhaps as important as rehearsing our post-structuralist lexicon; assemblages and asymmetry, heteroglossia and hyperobjects are valuable terms for ecocritical practice, but this reviewer is left unconvinced of their ethical value in the context of the battle between imperial discourse and indigenous epistemology in the period under study *and today.*

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## **Tom Furniss, *Discovering the Footsteps of Time: Geological Travel Writing about Scotland, 1700-1820*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. Pp. 305. £80. ISBN 9781474410014.**

What do you see when you look at a mountain? This was among the more fertile questions in the intellectual culture of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain. This period saw the codification of sublime and, latterly, picturesque aesthetics, modes of looking that went to work in literary genres as divergent as statistical surveying and epic poetry. Looking at mountains, even climbing them, laid bare fundamental relationships between subject and object, viewer and landscape, mankind and God. How can you be sure that you are looking at a mountain correctly and without prejudice? Are mountains always to some degree mirrors?

1700-1820, as Tom Furniss's new book explores, saw the emergence of a new geological enterprise that contributed to reshape thinking about mountains and landscapes. Perhaps the earth was considerably older than the Bible indicated. Even more radically, perhaps the planet was not a finished creation, but a changing mass that recorded and remained subject to the unimaginable contingencies of 'deep time'. Such revelations were not (only) produced from the comfort of writing desks, but through developing practices of scientific travel, centred on areas of outstanding geological interest including the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles.

This book contends that the negotiation of objectivity and subjectivity that would characterise Wordsworth's nature poetry was also active in geological travel writing. It begins in the late seventeenth century, when directives from the Royal Society established a methodology of natural history that required empiricism and objectivity to be watchwords of scientific travel writing. Furniss then tracks a gradual complication of this 'epistemological decorum' (59), reaching a climax with a tour undertaken in 1784 by the French professor Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond, whose account is presented as 'the first "Romantic" geological tour of Scotland' (129) because it is openly subjective, emotional and narrative-driven. Equally, Furniss finds Faujas engaging with a 'notion of a dynamic earth' (129) that is also termed 'Romantic', the traveller's eye (or rather, pen) conjoining subject and unstable object in a process of 'creative interaction' (130). In this sense, then, geology itself (as opposed to the static taxonomy of mineralogy) becomes a harbinger of Romanticism. The book moves towards 1820, by which time it finds that geology has parted ways with the Romantic to enter a new phase of rigorous disciplinarity.

Furniss's account is not a scientific history but a literary one. This perspective proves fruitful in drawing out tensions in the source tours, which are shown contemplating what (if any) role the 'literary' should have in the work of geological discovery. The book is a useful case study in the Enlightenment/Romanticism (non)binary that has exercised literary historians in recent years. (It is worth noting that the Wordsworthian aesthetics and 'place-specificity' (11) Furniss adopts are in 2018 among many contested models of Romanticism.) Equally, this study provides a substantial contribution to work on early travel literatures by chronicling a geological component – indeed, Furniss's (sometimes frustrating) tendency to quote frequently and extensively from both primary and secondary sources means that the book approaches the effect of an anthology of this sub-field. In geographical terms, the book centres on key locations, chief among them the Isle of Staffa with its celebrated basalt columns, popularised by the account of Joseph Banks in Thomas Pennant's 1772 tour and thereafter a fashionable destination that combined both geological and Ossianic forms of the sublime.

Pennant is a transitional figure here, largely in step with the empirical conventions of natural history, but presenting hints of an aesthetic consciousness Furniss associates with geology and Romanticism. Certainly the authoritative persona of the gentleman-scholar in Pennant pressurises the totem of objectivity. And indeed, the notion that he 'mostly eschews

speculations about past and future' (121) in favour of empirical immanence may be true of Pennant's geology but not his larger project, which draws so heavily on ideas of stadial history and 'improvement' that the 1772 tour ends in a conversation with the ghost of the historical Highlands. Furniss is probably at his best in a chapter on James Hutton, whose 'long geological perspective indicates that the very fabric of the British Isles is a relatively temporary product of the geostrophic cycle' (185) and nicely bears out a sense of epistemological revelation.

Anyone with an interest in mountaineering knows that 'tourism', a set of activities and attitudes clearly discernible in Britain by about 1800, combines both leisure and labour. Still, Furniss's largely successful book inhabits a specific moment in the culture of travel, when touristic subjectivity was integrated in an especially close dialogue with scholarly objectivity. The polite labour of these travellers was establishing not only what mountains mean, but also what the purposes of travel might be in an age of mobility, when people were on the move in unprecedented ways, including but not limited to work and war.

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## Paige Tovey, *The Transatlantic Eco-Romanticism of Gary Snyder*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. 244. £69.99. ISBN 9781349464746.

The growing field of transatlantic literary studies explores the ways in which the different national cultures of the Atlantic rim, previously conceived as distinct and bounded, are in fact mutually constituted through Atlantic networks of circulation and exchange. Consequently, at the foundation of much contemporary transatlantic studies is the image of an Atlantic world which is significantly more than the sum of the nation-states which comprise it. Palgrave's series The New Urban Atlantic edited by Elizabeth A. Fay, seeks to provide a multi-disciplinary and historical picture of the Circum-Atlantic world from the early Colonial period to the present day. The fourth title in the series, Paige Tovey's *The Transatlantic Eco-Romanticism of Gary Snyder*, sets itself the complex task of linking the work of Pulitzer Prize-winning contemporary poet Gary Snyder to the poetic precedents of British Romanticism. She draws a line of literary descent from English Romantic poetry in the form of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Blake, through the work of the American Transcendentalists and Modernist poetic innovators such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, all the way to Snyder's eco-poetic vision. In this narrative, Snyder is cast as a post-Romantic ecopoet whose body of work reflects a 'reignited, reformed and current Romanticism' (14).

Tovey's monograph does not follow in the footsteps of explicitly eco-critical studies of Snyder which focus on the philosophical and moral aspects of his ecological literary vision. Instead she emphasises Snyder's Romantic poetic inheritances by building on Charles Altieri's work on the influence of British Romanticism on twentieth-century American poetics in *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry During the 1960s* (1979), and Albert Gelpi's scholarship on the surprising continuities between Romanticism and Modernism in *A Coherent Splendor: The American Poetic Renaissance, 1910-1950* (1987). Tovey paints Snyder as a mediating figure: between Romantic and Modernist poetic visions, in connecting Eastern and Western cultural modes with his Buddhist practice and East-Asian influences, and in terms of his choice of a poetic role which negotiates between the natural environment and urban America. In her account, Snyder emerges as an artist intent on bridging these apparent dichotomies, placing him within a distinct Romantic tradition exemplified by acts of 'embracing contradiction in order to articulate comprehensive vision.' (8). Snyder therefore becomes a

composite and even paradoxical figure, interceding between humanity and nature, East and West, rural and urban, while his nuanced vision rejects any artificial reconciliation of these oppositions.

In Tovey's study Snyder can be seen to perform Shelley's poetic role of 'unacknowledged legislator', a task which is attended by familiar Romantic-era authorial anxieties about the role of the poet in his or her community, and she argues that in sympathy with his Romantic-era forbears, Snyder is a poet who consciously searches for an idiom that will be fully accessible to his readers. Snyder's formal innovations are also examined in terms of Romantic bequests, with his experiments in free form echoing debates on poetic form in the Romantic period. Through her careful and elegant readings Tovey guides us through Snyder's sparse and subtle poetry, where at one moment his poetic eye beholds an inner Romantic epiphany, and at another evokes the piercing clarity of the Modernist vision of Wallace Stevens or William Carlos Williams. She lucidly articulates the significance of Snyder's understated poetic devices and 'micro-effects' (84), revealing his elusive, and often unacknowledged, borrowings from English Romantic predecessors. While Wordsworth is an influence which Snyder has in fact openly rejected, Tovey successfully demonstrates the legacy of the English poet within his oeuvre.

Despite the clear achievements of her study in traversing several cultural movements and periodisations, Tovey's model of literary influence, which draws on Harold Bloom, raises some obstacles in terms of the transatlantic approach. Her poetic line of descent through the Romantics to Snyder is thoroughly chronological and represents the inheritance of a specifically Western and masculine conception of the natural world and the role of the poet. In this way, Tovey's study does not engage the more radical critical strategies which transatlantic approaches invite, principally a reconfiguration of linear models of influence and national tradition. Established understandings of key canonical writers, periods and movements instead remain intact from the separate domains of English Romanticism and American Literature. In this sense, perhaps Tovey's monograph does not quite meet the more comprehensive aims of the New Urban Atlantic series, with its focus on transmissions and connections which unsettle nation state boundaries and constitute a distinct Atlantic world. What she presents instead is a rich study of the Romantic inheritances which have informed the work of this understudied poet.

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