

Monika Coghén and Anna Paluchowska-Messing, eds., *Romantic Dialogues and Afterlives*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2021. Pp. 350. £44 (pb). ISBN 9788323349204.

The previous versions of the twenty articles included in *Romantic Dialogues and Afterlives* were part of 'Romantic Interactions', a conference organised in the Polish city of Kraków in 2019 by the Institute of English Studies of the Jagiellonian University and the Polish Society for the Study of European Romanticism. The category of 'interaction', avowedly taken from Susan Wolfson's book *Romantic Interactions: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action*, functioned as a trigger for considering Romantic writers' dialogues with their contemporaries and the cultures of the past, as well as their diverse afterlives in later works. Hence the title of the volume, which puts one category of Bakhtin with another one of Benjamin – 'dialogue' with 'afterlife' – to account for the variety of relationships explored by the essays.

The most powerful feature of the book lies, precisely, in the fact that the cultural significance of literature, in the Romantic period as well as before and after it, is seen not as located in the immanence of meaning but in its interrelations, that is, in readings, rewritings, conversations, strategies of legitimation, quotations, and crossings between borders and between disciplines. In a way, it is as if all literature is seen as comparative literature, even that which is produced within strict national boundaries.

This is particularly visible in the attention given to Keats's famous category 'negative capability'. The essays that recover it (Mary Jacobus, Gerard Kilroy, Ricardo Rato Rodrigues) emphasise its epistemological power; Jacobus even recognises in Keats an affinity with Benjamin's philosophy of history. Something similar can be said about other recovered Romantic theories, such as Schelling's 'indivisible Remainder' (surprisingly studied with Melville's *Moby Dick* by Marvin Reimann) or the experience of loss in Wordsworth and Coleridge's 'dejection' odes (Frederick Burwick). This is especially true of the revisitation of the ghost in the work of Percy Shelley by Monika H. Lee: the importance of spectrality is correlative with the (political and epistemological) importance of thresholds as spaces of intelligibility. It does not seem inappropriate, therefore, that Keats dominates the whole, since his work is made to claim that all poetic experience is relational, and that history is always in need of redemption. In addition to the three Keats essays already mentioned, the effect of the dialogue with Haydon in the sonnet 'Greats Spirits now on Earth are sojourning' (Hiroki Iwamoto) and the afterlives of 'Isabella' in visual art (Malgorzata Łuczyńska-Hołdys) are analysed.

Several contributions in the first half of the book return to Romantic authors of the British canon to review their conceptions of literature, using well-established methods of comparative analysis. There are studies on the presence of Neoplatonism in Coleridge's 'Religious Musings' (Natalie Tal Harries), the recourse to epic in the post-Revolutionary decade in Mary Robinson's *The Progress of Liberty* (Rayna Rosenova), and the way Byron weaves the poetics of *Don Juan* into a subtle re-reading of Horace (Rowland Cotterill). In the second half of the book, we find less expected dialogues and afterlives. We can read about the specialisation of geology in Zejszner (Marcin Leszczyński), the re-appropriation of one of Shelley's lines ('A subtler language within language wrought') in the philosophical projects of Earl Wasserman and Charles Taylor (Andrzej Pawelec), and the figure of the 'Noble Savage' in three German poets (William Christopher Burwick). Several works are directly devoted to investigating women's writing: Julie Donovan deals with the representation of Wales in Maria Edgeworth; Rebecca Warburton Boylan focus on the male rupture of domestic space in Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Emily Brontë, and Rachel Whiteread; and Marek Wilczyński follows in the footsteps of the American Margaret Fuller in Europe. One of the book's editors, Anna Paluchowska-Messing, offers a splendid study of the legitimation strategies of female

playwrights in the Romantic era (Hannah Cowley, Sophia Lee, Frances Burney, Joanna Baillie) by reading their paratexts, while Juliette Wells gives a lesson on the material study of reception and its critical potential by documenting the role of William Dean Howells in the 'rise of American Janeitism'. The volume concludes with a study by Nina Nowara-Matusik and Marek Krisch on the image of Poles in Germany during the *Vormärz* through a reading of Bettina von Arnim's *Polenbroschüre*.

The book's Polish mark is evident, but it is to be valued, above all, for its accentuation of comparatism as a literary approach. Although the book does not concentrate on this topic, it reminds us of the tension between national identity and forms of transnational circulation, which determined the Romantic experience and were replicated in its study. In addition to the contributions of each article, *Romantic Dialogues and Afterlives* reminds us of these tensions in the production of global knowledge and invites us to opt for comparative, interactional strategies to understand Romanticism. Perhaps the cover illustration (a Polish depiction of two Polish poets) should be read as a subtle and ironic underlining of this issue.

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