# The BARS Review

ISSN: 2049-7881



*Published online by the British Association for Romantic Studies*

Castle of Lerici: the ruined castle at a cliff, with a small temple on top right of the wall, birds flying around; trees in the foreground; four boats sailing in Gulf of Spezia on the left; mountains in the background; after Hakewill; scratched letter state. c.1817-1820. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduction used under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.

*This is a compilation of all the reviews published online in Number 58 of* The BARS Review. *A numbered contents list with page references is provided on page 2 of this document. Fully searchable versions of these reviews with enhanced metadata, as well as the archive of past numbers, can be viewed on* The BARS Review *website:* http://www.bars.ac.uk/review/.

# Contents

## Reviews



## Spotlight: Romantic Variations

**Naomi Billingsley, *The Visionary Art of William Blake: Christianity, Romanticism and the Pictorial Imagination.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2018. Pp. xxiii + 246. £70.00. ISBN 9780567694171.**

Naomi Billingsley's *The Visionary Art of William Blake* begins with a series of claims that elegantly sum up Blake's complex religious beliefs in relation to his visual representations of the figure of Christ: for Blake, Christianity, as it is properly practiced, is a form of art, and Christ, 'the model and the source of artistic activity', is the artist because he changes 'the way that we perceive the world' (1). Christ (Billingsley prefers this to 'Jesus' to distinguish his role within Blake's mythos from the biblical figure) thus provides a fitting organising principle for this study, which offers a rewarding analysis of Blake's visual idiolect.

Billingsley's investigation of Blake's visual approach builds on the work of a series of pre-eminent Blakeans, including Anthony Blunt, David Bindman, Martin Butlin, and Morris Eaves. Yet the detailed and intuitive close readings of Blake's imagery in this work provide a fresh prism through which to view Blake's output. Indeed, the angle from which Billingsley observes Blake's oeuvre has the effect of rearranging the landscape, as familiar works shift into the background to make way for a lesser studied set of texts. The introduction situates Blake within a Romantic tradition of visual art and notes the influence of James Barry and Benjamin West on Blake's 'intensely audience-centred approach to art' (12). This critical insight then acts as the throughline for the book.

In chapters 1 and 2, Billingsley explores a series of Christ-centred works completed in the second half of the 1790s and suggests it was then that Blake first began to engage extensively with images of Christ. For Billingsley, there is therefore the significant implication that the Christological 'conversion' long recognised as the innovation of Blake's later prophecies, *The Four Zoas* (ca.1796–1807), *Milton: A Poem* (ca.1804–11) and *Jerusalem* (1804–ca.1820), began in the visual realm before migrating to the poetic. Chapter 1 focuses in on the 'regenerative' capacity Blake ascribes to his art, in which a painting becomes 'a space in which the viewer can participate, and in which a rebirth or resurrection can take place' (27). Centred primarily on Blake's illustrations for an abortive edition of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, Billingsley argues against reading the images as a sustained critique of the poem as others have done. Rather, she discerns in Blake's representations of Christ a 'creative conflict' (34) with Young's rationalist religion, which sees Blake 'regenerate' Young's poem via '"corrective" interpretation' (59). Chapter 2 then considers depictions of the inspirational Christ that appears in the tempera paintings commissioned by Blake's generous patron Thomas Butts in 1799–1800. For Billingsley, these paintings locate the Christ of the nativity as the source of a prophetic embodiment available to all humankind, which Blake calls in his poetry the 'Divine Humanity'.

Chapter 3 analyses the series of watercolours Blake produced for Butts in 1800–6 and reads scenes from Jesus' public ministry by way of Morris Eaves' suggestion that Blake's conception of his relationship with his audience was intended to engender a 'Society of Imagination' (90). Billingsley thus convincingly argues that the seemingly impassive Jesus of these designs is intended to act upon his audience both within and outside of the paintings to trigger an imaginative response that sees the viewer become, as Billingsley puts it, the 'exemplar' of artistic activity (91). The fourth chapter then opens with one of the most difficult periods in Blake's life: his disastrous one-man exhibition of 1809. The descriptive catalogue for the exhibition sets out more explicitly than perhaps anywhere else in his oeuvre Blake's theoretical framework for his artistic approach. Though it mentions Jesus only briefly, Billingsley contends that these references confirm 'Christ as the source of that which the exhibition seeks to restore' (134). This is Christ, the eternal Human Form Divine, as the creator God. In one of the most sustained and compelling passages in the book, Billingsley then argues that Blake uses the illustrations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* to 'Christologise' (135) Milton's representation of a

paternalistic God, redeeming the poet from error as Blake had Young, by reimagining his vision of Christ. The final chapter turns to Blake's iconoclastic representations of the crucifixion, in which Billingsley observes a correspondence between Blake's own iconoclastic methods and his belief that Christ's death was an act of what Blake termed 'self-annihilation', the casting off of a self-absorbed selfhood, just as Blake approached his own end in the 1820s.

Many key concepts from Blake's sprawling mythology are recast from the perspective of his visual output in Billingsley's thought-provoking and pleasurably lucid book, making it essential reading for those still grappling with the peculiar nature of Blake's composite art.

*Lucy Cogan*
*National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway*

## Harriet Kramer Linkin, *The Collected Letters of Mary Blachford Tighe.* Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2020. Pp. xix + 519. £108. ISBN 9781611462470.

Mary Blachford Tighe, born in Dublin in 1772 to the Reverend William Blachford and Theodosia Tighe (both of affluent Anglo-Irish landed gentry stock), lived through some of the most precarious times in Anglo-Irish history. The French *Expedition d'Irlande* in 1796, during one of the cruellest winters of the eighteenth century, saw uprising, bloodshed, and terror. The looming Acts of Union, which Tighe personally opposed, became a bone of contention among the United Irishmen, and those loyal to the English establishment.

Tighe's preserved letters serve as an intriguing and almost voyeuristic peek into some of the inconspicuous mores unique to the Romantic period; but also into the life of a young, privileged, yet unassuming woman during a time of cataclysm in Ireland for the indigenous Irish people, and the gentry to which she belonged. (Of note is that *Tighe*, derived from the clan name *Tadhg*, means poet or philosopher; thus, her vocation seemed pre-ordained).

Harriet Kramer Linkin's dedication to Tighe's legacy led to the discovery of 46 letters that had remained sequestered in a box of Hamilton family papers in the National Library of Ireland until the editor's efforts finally unveiled them in 2013 (first promulgated in *Romanticism*, Volume 21, Issue 3, October 2015, pp. 207-227). Kramer Linkin carefully and methodically edits this engaging collection of 166 letters with lucidity and ease. As the pre-eminent custodian of Tighe's letters and legacy, the editor has worked tirelessly to fully reveal the importance of Tighe as 'one of the premier women poets writing during the Romantic period' and 'one of the most unusual in her resistance to publication, and her insistence on sharing her handwritten manuscripts with a small circle of friends and family members' (1).

Having authored in excess of 150 lyric poems 'that brilliantly delineate the emotional landscapes of love, loss, memory, and desire' (1), after Tighe's death in 1810 at the age of 38 her family burned the majority of her works with the exception of a few; among these is the five-volume novel *Selena* 'which probes the social and psychological pressures of romantic, familial, platonic and, aesthetic interactions' (1), and it is the only work she printed during her own lifetime; and her six-canto allegorical Spenserian poem *Psyche; or, the Legend of Love* which places Psyche on an equal footing with her inamorato, Cupid, and installs Tighe as a feminist philosopher after the indefatigable mother of women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Psyche* caught the eye of Thomas Moore, who so admired it that he responded with his poem *To Mrs. Henry Tighe on reading her Psyche.* After her death, a new edition of the poem was published in 1811, along with some other verse that had never been published; Keats, after reading this new edition, paid tribute to Tighe in *To Some Ladies,* thus awarding the recognition she had long

deserved, even if it was fated to be posthumous. Tighe's (then Blachford) early letters in this collection hint at the influential role Methodism played in her youth, and her family connections 'to the Wesleys, the Shirleys, the Smyths, the Spilsburys, and others in that circle' (10).

The funereal pyre of her writing may have been due to Tighe's reluctance to have her literary efforts publicly disseminated far and wide — 'take whatever steps can be taken towards preventing the publication' (302). While this is a substantial loss for romantic scholars, fortunately, her letters discovered, collected, and masterfully compiled here by Kramer Linkin lend us the opportunity to track and analyse Tighe's feelings and thoughts on a plethora of topics. Her impressive social connections and interactions unfurl in an elegant flurry of reflective and sincere (if not inordinately apologetic) letters. Her words fall on these pages like delicate fragments of historical artefacts and eventually what emerges is a portrait of a well-connected Anglo-Irish Romantic lady writer whose life of intellectual curiosity and literary proficiency was all too short, and devoid of the great romantic intimacy she envisioned for her protagonists.

The author notably devotes much time and attention in signposting for the reader the exact dates, locations, senders and receivers of the letters, and letter numeration. Additionally, there are extensive notes to clarify matters pertaining to individuals and situations discussed by Tighe and her connections. Also included are editorial and bibliographical notes, chronological framing, a guide to abbreviations, and the Tighe family tree. These portions of Kramer Linkin's book are seamlessly interwoven in order that the reader is never at a loss in terms of context, content, nor Tighe's writing conventions.

Kramer Linkin's collection is so accessible and furnished with such well-informed supplementary research that it is bound to open up new opportunities for the study, discussion, and celebration of one of Ireland's most esteemed Romantic woman poets.

*Roisin McCloskey*
*Ulster University*

## Samantha Matthews, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture: Poetry, Manuscript, Print, 1780-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xi + 291. £60. ISBN 9780198857945.

Samantha Matthews's fascinating study has its origin in 'the albo-mania' that afflicted middle-class young women in the 1820s and 1830s, the short-lived fashion that induced them to besiege authors and public figures with requests that they offer a contribution to their albums: an inscription, it may be, or simply an autograph, or, best of all, a sketch or a signed poem. But Matthews is not primarily interested in examining the albums that they compiled. Her interest is rather in examining the place of album keeping in 'the wider culture' of the Romantic period (4). The album phenomenon lays bare the complex, often paradoxical relationship in the period between male writers and women readers, and between autograph and typeface or manuscript and print.

Contributions to an album were equally valued for the hand in which they were written as for their content. The name of the Duke of Wellington was ubiquitous, but Dora Wordsworth's album included the Duke's signature. It was in the years from 1780 to 1850 that publishing became an industry supplying a mass readership, and albums, it might seem, reacted against this development. *The Corsair* and *Rob Roy* were infinitely reproducible, whereas each album was unique. In fact, the relationship between albums and the publishing industry was more complex, one lively demonstration of which is that Matthews's first two chapters deal with the 'Album of the Fathers', offered to all those who visited the Grande Chartreuse, and the album kept by the Jerningham family to which visitors to Costessey Hall, the family's Norfolk

seat, were invited to contribute. Both albums have disappeared, and can be reconstructed only because some of the contributions have been 'remediated', to borrow Matthews's preferred term, in print.

In her third chapter, Matthews focuses on Sarah Sophia Child-Villiers, the rich and beautiful Lady Jersey, friend of Byron and one of the leading Whig hostesses, who began keeping an album in 1805 when she was 20. The habit stayed with her for the rest of her life. Lady Jersey was powerful enough to exert control over the content of her albums – she marked certain entries, including one of Byron's, 'not to be copied' – with the result that through the sequence of her albums she charts her understanding of herself and her world. It was commonplace for contributors to compare the book in which they wrote to its female owner, but in Lady Jersey's case the comparison had added point. The contributor who noted the album's 'gold and azure dress' thought of it as a 'Drawing-room' in which the 'wise and lively, grave and gay' were assembled, pointing out that in just a few years the room would become a 'silent Catacomb', and understood that her albums were scarcely to be distinguished from the woman who kept them (123). Like the scrapbooks of the Scottish poet, Edwin Morgan, they might be understood as a covert autobiography.

In the 1820s enthusiasm for albums spread to the middle classes. As soon as it did so, 'albo-mania' produced its antidote: the hostility to albums, the young women who kept them, and the kinds of poems they included that Charles Lamb called 'albo-phobia'. Male poets and critics united to disparage a fashion that threatened to feminise and to deprofessionalise the craft of poetry. Poets took to complaining of the unending requests for contributions. 'I die of Albo-phobia!' Lamb remarked, explaining his decision to move to Enfield as prompted solely by his need to 'escape the Albumean persecution' (163). The strident hostility common amongst poets to albums and to the young women who kept them is an exemplary instance of the fraught relationship between poets and their readers so characteristic of the period. But the relationship was paradoxical. Lamb both satirised albums and contributed to them more generously than any other Romantic poet. He even published a volume of verse entitled, with predictable consequences for its reception, *Album Verses, with a Few Others*. He responded to that hostile reception by writing a review of his own volume in which he defended album verses as poems that could only appear in an album dedicated to a specific person and for whom they were composed, which compounds the mystery of why he had chosen to collect his own album verses in a printed volume offered to the general reader.

Most albums were kept by women, and most contributions to them were made by men, an asymmetry that Matthews explores most feelingly in her final chapter in which she studies the albums kept by Edith Southey, Sara Coleridge, and Dora Wordsworth, all of whom (even Sara Coleridge) found it as impossible to win independence from their formidable fathers in their albums as they did in the rest of their lives. Matthews's rich and richly illustrated study illuminates the album culture of the Romantic period but, as she rightly claims, it sheds much light too on the wider literary culture of the period.

*Richard Cronin*
*Emeritus, University of Glasgow*

## James Watt, *British Orientalisms, 1759-1835*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. vii + 285. £78.99. ISBN 9781108472661.

As in his previous monograph about the Gothic, James Watt's new book focuses on the latter half of the eighteenth century and early decades of the nineteenth century. Watt immediately situates his argument in opposition to recent scholarly work that suggests Britons' engagement with the East was more cosmopolitan and open to difference than previously understood. He acknowledges the value of these studies of encounter at the same time he argues for a qualification of these claims by showing the complexities of the historical situation and the often contradictory and changing perspectives held by writers. His book takes as its focus these conflicting perceptions of self and nation as England became more entangled in the East.

While the premise of the book seems unsurprising – that Britons did not share a single ideology regarding England's engagement with the East – Watt provides a welcome addition to conversations about Orientalism. Watt suggests that his approach 'illuminat[es] the dynamics of cultural contestation in the period, too, helping to thicken accounts of the influence of scholars such as [Sir William] Jones, or the reception of the *Arabian Nights* and other 'tales of the East' (9). The subtle reference to Clifford Geertz's methodology of thick description clearly reflects Watt's own more literary-specific approach. Monographs often feel a bit repetitive but Watt's inclusion of diverse texts, pairing canonical with lesser-known works keeps the reader interested and adds to our understanding of the historical milieu. Indeed, the diversity of literary genres forms an important part of Watt's argument, highlighting how literary form can reinforce specific ideologies.

With an introduction, seven chapters, and a brief conclusion, Watt manages to cover an impressive number of texts and conversations over a 75-year period. The first chapter explores how 'the Oriental tale' (Samuel Johnson), 'the informant narrative' (Oliver Goldsmith), and 'the story sequence' (James Ridley) responded to the expansion of Britain's empire with the Seven Years' War, each demonstrating an awareness of a national impatience to expand while at the same time questioning the effects of increasing exposure to the Other. This first chapter sets up Watt's larger narrative of writers who demonstrate inconsistent views across their own writing while also differing from their peers. Watt's second chapter focuses on how prose fiction in the 1770s and 1780s provided an avenue to share information about the East with those in Britain. From corruption and despotism to a positive economic and nationalistic spirit, the writers (including Charles Johnstone and Mariana Starke) again demonstrate warring perspectives. The third chapter continues the discussion of Oriental despotism by concentrating on the ubiquitous idea of the degradation of women and immorality of seraglios, emphasised in adaptations of the *Arabian Nights*. British writers used such ideas to provide a 'recuperative function for Britons, allowing them better to appreciate their own freedoms' (119). Watts offers Elizabeth Hamilton's *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* as a counterpoint, questioning Britons' claims of moral superiority. Chapter 4 focuses primarily on Sir William Jones and his influence on others, complicating his avowed openness to the literature and culture of India (and his role in a 'rediscovery' of India) by questioning his silence on the violence and suffering offered by imperialism. Using Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* and Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, among others, Chapter 5 shows how Orientalist poetry negotiated complex political interests. Watt takes a turn to 'Cockney Orientalism' in Chapter 6, looking at Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb, who relied on second-hand accounts and demonstrated a benign sympathy with Orientalism. Watt problematises these views by considering Hunt's exclusion of China and Lamb's employment with the East India Company. Finally, the picaresque fiction discussed in Chapter 7 explores how writers in the early nineteenth century used informant narrators to share the 'real' character of 'Orientals' and the resulting criticisms of that approach.

Watt concludes his book with Thomas Babington Macaulay's racist paternalism. In contrast to many of the earlier writers who saw an opportunity for cultural exchange, Macaulay sees nothing to be gained in that regard, instead typifying the nineteenth-century British view of the Other as needing guidance. Yet, once again, Watt complicates the narrative by exploring several responses that challenge Macaulay's view, including Leigh Hunt, who desires the fictional, escapist Orient of literature and rejects the social reality. The idea of a relationship between the expanding British economic imperial interests and an expansion of cultural knowledge posited by writers at the beginning of the period is effectively negated by the end of the book; thus, the pleasurable, constructed Orient (and any implied sympathetic openness) becomes thoroughly divorced from any kind of real contact zone.

Overall, Watt's book offers a well-researched, thoughtful expansion of British Orientalisms in the decades leading up to Victoria's vast empire.

*Stacey Kikendall*
*Park University*

## Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Hellas: Introducción, traducción y notas de José Ruiz Mas* [*Hellas: Introduction, translation and notes by José Ruiz Mas*]. Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neohelénicos y Chipriotas, 2021. Pp. 142. £0. ISBN 9788418948053.

**Open Access: http://www.centrodeestudiosbnch.com/es/pagina/819**

The Centro de Estudios Bizantinos Neohelénicos y Chipriotas, a research institute associated with the University of Granada, could not have afforded to miss the opportunity to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the Greek-Ottoman War (1821–30), through which Greece obtained her independence from the Ottoman Empire. Naturally, the celebrations of Greece's independence have not gone unnoticed in Greece and Cyprus, but in Spain the event has had less presence, except for historians specialised in the Eastern Mediterranean affairs of the nineteenth century.

Many know about Byron's role in the Greek war of liberation, but Shelley's is not so widely known outside of literary scholars' circles. Unlike his close friend Byron, Shelley never did get to set foot on the Greek lands, although he did consider doing so at some stage. Shelley unexpectedly drowned soon after publishing *Hellas*, but up until the point of this tragic event, he had followed closely all the war news and lamented Britain's lack of involvement in the Greek struggle, which favoured Ottoman interests.

Ruiz Mas's timely edition comprises a thorough presentation on the historical context of Greece and the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s. He concentrates on philhellenism in Britain and more specifically on Shelley's interest in the Greek struggle. In his introduction, Ruiz Mas elaborates on Shelley's staunch chant of the virtues of the Greeks as a people and on their love for liberty. He then explores Shelley's revolutionary and radical liberal beliefs to explain the poet's favouring of the Greek cause, his everyday life during his self-exiled stay from England in Italy, and his studies of Greece (including ancient Greek playwrights and philosophers, and Greek newspapers, journals, and history books). There are also details of Shelley's personal contacts with leading Greek scholars and politicians in his Pisan Circle (the most prominent of these being the exiled Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos, private teacher of Greek to Mary Shelley and future political leader). Finally, Ruiz Mas explains Shelley's poetic inspiration from Aeschylus' *Persae*, and his philhellenism under the influence of Mavrokordatos, which resulted in Shelley's deeply ideologically driven verse drama *Hellas*.

*Hellas* was published by C. & J. Ollier as early as 1822 on Shelley's insistence as he wished to have an impact on the immediacy of the events taking place in the Aegean. Shelley did not disguise his propagandistic intention in the writing of his pro-Hellene play. Due to its forced urgency, some parts of the work were left unfinished. This is the case of the Prologue of *Hellas* (unpublished in the play's first edition of 1822 and only published in Richard Garnett's 1862 edition), where some phrases and sentences are left incomplete, evidence that Shelley had been working on the play until his untimely and unexpected death. This Spanish edition includes these textual gaps, Shelley's personal explanatory notes at the end of his verse play, as well as those added by Mary Shelley after the termination of the Greek War of Independence. Indeed, Mary Shelley's notes explain the circumstances of her late husband's writing of *Hellas* and the political events that took place, subsequent to the poet's death, throughout 1822–30. Mary Shelley insists on the prophetic nature of her husband's commentaries and impressions offered in 1821, which assert a belief in Greece's future, final, victory, and an acknowledgement of the country's independence from the Ottomans at a time when such a prospect seemed improbable. Mary Shelley also regards *Hellas* as an inspired and prophetic promoter of the enthusiastic atmosphere of liberal revolutions that were to take place in Europe during the late 1820s and 1830s.

Ruiz Mas' Spanish translation endeavours to be faithful to Shelley's complicated English style and for this he deserves due credit. Shelley's imagery and phrasing is not easy to encapsulate in a foreign language, especially when the multi-syllable Spanish vocabulary has to encompass the pregnant meaning of Shelley's poetic lines, as is specifically the case, for example, in the Chorus's and the different Semi-Choruses' verse interventions. Apart from the intrinsic worth of the poetic Spanish translation of Shelley's poetry, special recognition must be granted to the editor's copious explanatory footnotes on the historical context of Britain, Greece, and the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, of the literary and mythological allusions and references made by Shelley in his play, and on geographic details of Greece and Turkey unfamiliar to non-native readers. Shelley's *oeuvre* has long deserved an edition of *Hellas* for Spanish-speaking literary scholars and Ruiz Mas's edition has successfully achieved this momentous task.

*Eroulla Demetriou*
*Universidad de Jaén, Spain*

## Mirella Agorni, *Translating Italy for the Nineteenth Century: Translators and an Imagined Nation in the Early Romantic Period 1816-1830s*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2021. Pp. 182. £36.05. ISBN: 9783034336123.

The title of Mirella Agorni's new monograph echoes her earlier *Translating Italy for the Eighteenth Century: British Women, Translation and Travel Writing (1739-1797)*, published in 2002. Yet, as the two subtitles make clear, the book under review is more a *pendant* to, than a sequel of, the previous study. Both works share a focus on Italy and Anglo-Italian relations, translation history, and the underlying principle that translation shapes literary and cultural contexts. As with her previous work, Agorni's new book adopts a methodological and theoretical framing that combines system theory and a localist perspective for historical research in translation. By concentrating on forms of translation and cultural mediation in Italy from the post-Napoleonic Restoration to the pre-Risorgimento, Agorni ties her study to a recent wave of interest in the culture of the country's pre-unification era and, particularly, in the role played by translation in the formation of its nineteenth-century culture. Within this context, Agorni's recent

book expands our knowledge of contacts and exchanges in an early nineteenth-century context of major transformations in the interactions among European cultural systems.

In her lucidly argued introduction, Agorni outlines the theoretical framework of the book with a light touch that will be welcome to those who are not specialists in Translation Studies. Then, in the book's six succinct chapters, she approaches her multifaceted object of analysis by drawing on a wide range of critical and cultural-historical sources, as well as primary translations and their paratexts, and periodical publications. After offering an overview of the socio-political and cultural situation of early nineteenth-century Italy, she turns to mining a variety of topics that comprise intercultural mediators, debates on translation, translation and the Classic/Romantic controversy as part of a process of cultural transformation, the definition of a 'Romantic approach' to translation, and finally a case study of Gaetano Barbieri's translations of Walter Scott's novels. The controversy generated by Madame de Staël's influential article 'On the Spirit of Translation' (1816) published in the periodical *Biblioteca Italiana* receives due attention in the third chapter and is a recurrent and familiar point of reference. Overall, thanks to these wide-ranging explorations, readers gain a much fuller and more complex idea of a richly nuanced and far from refractory cultural domain.

Foregrounding the question of imagining the nation, Agorni reconstructs a historical-cultural phase in which Italian intellectuals sought to identify how the country's culture and politics could overcome belatedness and marginality, and reconsiders the role of translation (especially interlinguistic, literary translation) within this process. Romantic ideas and forms from abroad represented a major opportunity for new conversations with other cultures in line with Madame de Staël's recommendations in 'On the Spirit of Translation'. And although conservatives and classicists saw this approach as a form of cultural subservience, it produced influentially creative effects in the writings of authors, including Alessandro Manzoni and Giacomo Leopardi, who reconfigured Romantic notions to speak directly to Italy's heritage and the early Risorgimento phenomena emerging in the 1820s and 1830s.

In her book, Agorni traces the picture of a gradually expanding reading public, new forms of mediation and the role translation plays in this context, as well as new networks of cultural players and centres of cultural elaboration and diffusion. Certainly, the overall image is a highly problematic one, and Agorni does not shirk from such questions as the loss of international prestige of recent Italian literature that instigated a generalized sense of cultural inferiority, the hindrances represented by different cultural legislation and censorship in the various Italian states, or a still limited reading public and the reduced presence and circulation of reviews and other periodicals. With these issues firmly in mind, Agorni investigates the potential of translation to instigate changes in literature and culture more broadly. Chapter four, in particular, highlights this potential by bringing into focus a nascent approach to translation based on 'mediated fidelity' (p. 72), translation's contribution to cultural self-identification, and a refreshing visibility awarded to translators, as their voices become 'increasingly present in the extra-textual apparatus' (p. 77).

Offering both an overview and detailed examinations of specific cases, Agorni's study provides a mobile, lively picture of the world of translation from foreign languages (and especially English) in Italy between 1816 and the 1830s. Thus, she convincingly delineates the increasing presence of literary translations at a significant moment of intersection with other cultural-historical developments in a country that was a patchwork of states in which national discourses were only beginning to take shape. Repositioning translation at the centre of these changes, Agorni sketches a panorama populated by different figures and forms of mediation, clashing ideas, and multiplying texts and debates, enabling readers to explore an intricate and crucial period that laid the bases for an imagined nation and its projection into the future.

*Diego Saglia*
*Università di Parma, Italy*

**David Duff, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xxi + 792. 14 illus. £110.00. ISBN 9780199660896.**

*The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism* is an extraordinary achievement both in its planning and execution. Published as part of the invaluable *Oxford Handbooks* series, this volume of over 700 pages boasts forty-six essays by experts in their specialist field concerned with aspects of what we collectively understand as 'British Romanticism', however contested that understanding might be. The *Handbook* is neatly divided into ten parts with sections detailing key subjects that enable some definition of this notoriously slippery term: 'Historical Phases'; 'Region and Nation'; 'Hierarchies'; 'Legislation'; 'Cognition'; 'Composition'; 'Publication'; 'Language'; 'Aesthetics'; concluding with, finally, 'Imports and Exports'. In many ways this volume sums up the collective endeavours, insights, and arguments of a generation or two of scholars of British Romanticism over perhaps forty years or so, now made available in this single volume. I suspect that most users of the volume will identify and sample the individual chapters in which they are interested, probably via the excellent *Oxford Handbooks Online* facility in combination with cognate databases such as *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online* and *Oxford Scholarship Online*, all transforming the ways in which we teach and research. Few may read the whole volume from cover to cover sequentially, assessing it as a complete work, as this reviewer has done in order to form a view of how the collection is mapping out the current field of British Romanticism and how this conceptualisation reflects our general understanding of the state of studies of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature, art, and culture, in what we think of as the Romantic Period.

David Duff, editor of the volume, sets out several key assumptions or 'major premises' in his 'Introduction' which he argues underpin the conceptualisation of Romanticism that the *Handbook* provides its readers. For Duff, Romanticism is not solely or chiefly a system of aesthetics (contested or otherwise), but more properly a 'movement […] which transformed the literary culture of Britain, and critical analysis of the nature, causes, and effects of that transformation began in the Romantic period itself (1760–1830)' (1). The dating of a period of seven decades from 1760 is thus somewhat generous, though many might prefer prolonging the end date to 1832 (the Great Reform Act) or 1837 (the accession of Victoria to the throne). Many (myself among them) also might wish to claim the decade of the 1830s as crucial for Romantic writing and aesthetics. The dramatic impact of those major, transformational political events of the American and French Revolutions is thus somewhat mitigated by mid eighteenth-century British cultural and political concerns. The *Handbook*, though parsimonious towards the later period, absorbs earlier texts, notably by Thomas Percy, James Macpherson, Thomas Gray, Laurence Sterne, and Thomas Chatterton, from the 1760s onward for its understanding of British Romanticism, thus linking early Romantic writing with eighteenth-century cultures of sensibility, orality, and Whiggism. Duff pushes back against the current critical orthodoxy, arguing that '"Romanticism" is not simply a retrospective critical construct […] but an observable phenomenon whose historical development can be traced and at least partially explained' (1). This phenomenon was also 'in the full sense, a "movement"', though one possessed of 'a contagious, mobile quality […] both in the British context and internationally' (1). It is not entirely clear here what constitutes an artistic movement in this 'full sense' or how such a movement operates and coheres over time and geography. Is the movement all-pervading or are some writers in the Romantic period excluded from its sweep or resistant to its power? Duff claims as another major premise of the *Handbook* that 'Romanticism is a contested phenomenon and an internally divided one', with 'schools, factions, demarcations, position-taking, and polemic […] emphasized throughout' (3).

The purpose of the *Handbook* is thus to show how such 'patterns came to be established' (1). Romanticism is especially characterised by forms of 'transcendentalism', yet the 'transcendental qualities of Romantic literature become more, not less remarkable, when we pay attention to the material forms in which they were transmitted' (2). This model of British Romanticism as a movement is complicated by the several 'distinct phases' which it passes through, which the very strong contextual chapters of the *Handbook* approach largely as a series of significant decades rather than generations (Nick Groom, Jon Mee, Simon Bainbridge, Kelvin Everest, Angela Esterhammer). The revolutionary decade of the 1790s and the French Revolution remains crucial, but the 1820s also assumes a new significance and importance, with 1800–1815 similarly championed as a neglected 'middle phase'. The complexity of the movement is further complicated by the insistence that British Romanticism is also constituted by a variety of 'different national and regional traditions' (2). This focus on the diversity of Romanticism in the British context is most welcome, and the *Handbook* features very generous coverage of Scottish, Irish, and Welsh writing in the period, especially Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, Edward Williams, Maria Edgeworth and many more. In addition to this 'Four Nations' critical paradigm of British Romanticism, the *Handbook* asserts that British Romanticism is 'a transnational phenomenon' with its 'own international dimension' and, 'despite the national rivalries and ideological conflicts into which it was inevitably drawn, was part of European and global Romanticism' (8). In many ways it seems that, rather as in Thomas De Quincey's famous analogy in *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845) of the palimpsest for the conscious and unconscious human mind, the *Handbook*, during its gestation, has softly layered a series of sedimentary critical constructions of Romanticism, one upon another, from earlier models of comparative criticism, 1980s historicism, 'Four Nations' paradigms, and most recently the focus on discrete decades of cultural activity.

The *Handbook* is strong on traditional Romantic period aesthetics and its continental European philosophical background, especially the impact of Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics, and several essays engage with this intellectual trajectory (notably Andrew Bennett, Tim Milnes, Nicholas Halmi, Stephen Behrendt, Noel Jackson, Patrick Vincent, and James Vigus), with Thomas Keymer's chapter, 'The Subjective Turn', impressively locating Romantic aesthetics in Laurence Sterne's innovative cultivation of the literary self. The currently vibrant field of book history and the reviewing culture and profession are strongly reflected in essays by William Christie, Paul Keen, and Michael Gamer. One of the key critical sources most frequently cited is the late William St Clair's invaluable and highly influential study, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). The persistence of earlier balladry and the presence in Romanticism of various oral traditions mediated to the cultural elite are addressed by contributions from Nick Groom, Penny Fielding, Mary-Ann Constantine, Erik Simpson, and Jane Hodson. In this respect, another frequently cited influential critical text is Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton University Press, 1997). The role of labouring writers is strongly featured, and discussions of John Clare, Burns, and Hogg are prominent, firmly cementing Clare's current canonical presence. Where, for me at least, the volume is lacking, however, is in its treatment of overseas colonialism and empire, or what we might think of as the global dimensions of British Romanticism. In the Romantic period, the heated debate over the transatlantic slave trade reached new heights, witnessing both the Abolition Act of 1807 and the Emancipation Act of 1833. The troubled legacies of colonial slavery from the period trouble the living stream of today. Although Fiona Robertson's essay, on 'Transatlantic Engagements', emphasises that 'Paul Gilroy's model of the "Black Atlantic" has been adapted to the "Red" or "Indian" Atlantic; and the human freight of the slave trade has been a constituent factor in trans-Atlanticism, which implicitly, on an ideological level, refashions the routes of trade and human trafficking' (725), the *Handbook* contains only two brief references to Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789), surely now a major period text. Surprisingly, there is no mention at all of such an important text as *The*

*History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* (1831), nor is there any serious extended treatment of the many slave autobiographies of the period. Such writers and texts surely have a place in our study of 'British Romanticism'? In the period, Britain lost its American colonies and developed a new empire in the east. There is scant coverage of this momentous historical shift in the *Handbook* and its implications for Romantic writing and its subsequent history. The presence of Indian writers, such as the traveller, surgeon, and entrepreneur Dean Mahomed (Din Mohammed) – who opened the first Indian restaurant in London and introduced 'shampooing' and massage parlours among other things, and who published his remarkable *Travels of Dean Mahomet* in 1794, the first English language travel memoir by an Indian writer – sadly goes unmentioned. Similarly, Henry Louis Derozio, India's first national poet, who adapted Romantic models, especially Byronic, to Indian subjects and topographies, and who disseminated Western learning and science in Bengal's intellectual circles, is also not mentioned. The *Handbook* contains a sound essay on 'Orientalism' (James Watt) as a literary and cultural style, but it is written from the representational viewpoint of canonical Western writers. Several essays in the *Handbook* rightly emphasise 1814–15 and the final military defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo as a key moment for British Romantic literature and culture, but the sheer impact and pressure of the British territorial acquisitions after that date of around twenty-five percent of the world's population is less acutely felt. The Edmund Burke that features here is very much that of sublime aesthetics and the French Revolution, rather than the Burke of India and the trials of Warren Hastings, on which much recent scholarship has focused.

Overall, the *Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism* is a tremendous resource for scholars and students of the subject and one that will contribute to our teaching and research perspectives over the coming years. In many ways, through its rich and varied contributions, it represents the summary of perhaps some forty years or so of scholarly enquiry and endeavour by more than one critical generation of Romanticists which has definitively transformed the subject that many of us encountered back in our undergraduate days. Whether it will serve as a master chart suggesting new directions beyond our established routes of scholarly exploration in the study of British Romanticism over the coming decades with those troublesome yet insistent demands to 'Decolonise the Curriculum' is not as certain to this reviewer at least.

*Peter J. Kitson*
*University of East Anglia*

# Spotlight: Romantic Variations

## Gerard Lee McKeever, *Dialectics of Improvement: Scottish Romanticism, 1786-1831*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 222. £80. ISBN 9781474441674.

A valuable addition to the growing body of work on Scottish Romanticism's contributions to conceptualising modernity, Gerard Lee McKeever's *Dialectics of Improvement* foregrounds Scottish writers' innovative uses of genre and aesthetics to create new perspectives on our modern world. McKeever's monograph convincingly argues that the aesthetic frameworks generated by Scottish Romantic writers fostered new discourses about improvement and modernity and created new possibilities for the role of literature. By improvement, McKeever means not a teleological or linear narrative of modernisation but 'a matrix of ideas about progress, many but not all of which cohere' (8). Building on the work of Ian Duncan, Penny Fielding, Matthew Wickman, and others, McKeever argues that Scottish writers of the Romantic period were particularly well positioned to articulate the ambiguity of 'improvement' because of Scotland's marginal position within the four nations and the rapid changes Scottish society experienced after the Jacobite uprising in 1745 and the Highland Clearances. McKeever anchors his claim that Scottish writers shaped our modern understanding of the perils and benefits of social and economic progress in careful readings of major genres, including the poetry of Robert Burns, the short fiction of James Hogg and Walter Scott, the plays of Joanna Baillie, and the novels of John Galt. By linking narratives of improvement to the literary frameworks forged by a range of Scottish writers, McKeever makes a compelling case for Scottish Romanticism's influence on modern aesthetic practices that continue to negotiate tensions between national and local cultures and an increasingly complex global world.

McKeever's engaging reading of Robert Burns's 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' in his first chapter serves as a model for his thoughtful treatment of aesthetics, history, and culture throughout his book. McKeever reads Burns's poem as forwarding a sense of 'tradition-within-progress', which figures time as a 'line overlapping a circle' (47). Tradition, represented by the cotter and the 'cottage ideal' he embodies, serves as the line; it also models a form of faith outside of institutionalised religion and associates this new form of worship with the cottage, which becomes a figure for a timeless tradition. McKeever puts Burns's 'cottage ideal' in dialogue with William Gilpin and other British aesthetic writers. Notably, as McKeever writes, Gilpin included 'The Cotter' in his 1789 edition of *Observations, Relative to Picturesque Beauty*, three years after the poem was first published. The line of tradition represented by the cotter and his cottage both cuts through and 'sutures' the conflict between Britain's 'modernizing goals' and 'residual social structures' (54). The enduring cottage aesthetic fostered by Burns's poem helped create a sentimental ideal for readers and a cultural space for tradition and the local that persists within our increasingly global and industrial world.

In subsequent chapters, McKeever finds Scottish writers addressing this same tension between residual Scottish social structures and increasingly complex modern economic and industrial frameworks in short fiction, drama, and the novel. James Hogg's and Walter Scott's tales and sketches in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *Chronicles of the Canongate* exploit the 'indeterminacy' inherent to short fiction and the genre's roots in Scottish oral culture to find new ways of exploring tradition's function in modernity (73–74). Similarly, Joanna Baillie's plays, specifically *Count Basil*, *The Family Legend*, and *The Alienated Manor*, explore the pedagogical potential of the theatre for establishing enduring moral guidelines meant to 'reform' the growing bourgeoisie and encourage them to reflect on the perils of improvement and Scotland's 'primitive' past (137). A concluding chapter engages with John Galt's novels *The Entail* and *Annals of the Parish*; Galt notably avoided the term 'novel' for his fiction, preferring

the label 'theoretical history'. Galt's own experiments with aesthetics make his work an ideal fit for McKeever's concluding chapter. He argues that Galt's fiction struggles to reconcile modernity and empire with cultural forms that are rooted in local and regional pasts and explores how to sustain national character without allowing it to slip into a dangerous and atavistic form.

McKeever has a gift for explaining complex theoretical ideas and applying them to literary texts; this is evident in his careful juggling of twentieth- and twenty-first-century aesthetic theories and the Scottish Enlightenment's treatment of progress and aesthetics. Although one of the many strengths of this monograph was its focus on aesthetics and literary form, I did find myself at times looking for a more direct treatment of the Scottish Enlightenment. Recent studies of Scottish Enlightenment historiography, particularly the work of Silvia Sebastiani, has uncovered the role Scottish Enlightenment theories of progress played in our modern understandings of race and gender. A direct and sustained engagement with race and gender and their contributions to the aesthetics of improvement might have strengthened an already excellent book. Despite this, McKeever's well-crafted and thoroughly researched monograph makes a clear case for the continued study of Scottish Romanticism and its relevance to our modern world.

*JoEllen DeLucia*
*Central Michigan University*

## Ian Haywood, Susan Matthews, and Mary L. Shannon, eds., *Romanticism and Illustration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xvi + 326. £94.99. ISBN: 9781108425711.

'We have lost the ability to fully understand and appreciate the place of illustration in the Romantic period' (1). The bold declaration that opens Romanticism and Illustration captures the guiding and unifying principles of this carefully curated and expertly edited scholarly collection. As the editors note, scholars have not always grasped the specific meaning of 'illustration' in the Romantic period and the extent to which illustrations played a dynamic role in the determination of meaning, offering perspectives that encouraged nuanced and, sometimes, radical reinterpretations of the books in which they appeared.

Central to this book's argument is Julia Thomas's claim that 'illustration is an eminently social genre' that crosses class boundaries (*Nineteenth-Century Illustration and the Digital* (2017), p. 97). In London exhibition spaces (including Spring Garden, Somerset House, and the Boydell Gallery), middle-class audiences could learn from accompanying textual and visual clues to pass as members of the cultural elite. But outside these spaces, illustrated books encouraged reader-viewers to become active participants in the creation of meaning. For Peter Otto and Sophie Thomas, in their respective readings of William Blake's illustrations for Genesis and Thomas Gray's 'The Bard', it is Blake himself who sets the standard for this notional reader-viewer by enabling the role of the image to expand 'from explanation (in the service of the restoration of the author/creator's meaning), to critique, renarration, and re-envisioning' (44).

This blurring of category distinctions is sustained in Dustin M. Frazier Wood's chapter on illustrated histories, poetic drama, and the representation of the national past. Focusing on representations of the Anglo-Saxon queen Elfrida, Frazier Wood observes how the conflation of historical, creative, visual, and dramatic illustrations 'each informed the ways in which reader-viewers encountered, understood, and imagined the other' (89). Similarly, Martin Priestman examines how Erasmus Darwin 'increasingly turned to Fuseli to convey the often-abstruse science of his long "philosophical" poems' (99–100) and how Blake, in his role as the engraver of Fuseli's images, challenged a received view of the hierarchical relationship between painter

and engraver. Focusing on Fuseli's illustrations of domestic space in *Cowper's Poems in Two Volumes*, Susan Matthews's chapter reveals an artist revelling in the seductive interiors of bourgeois life while recoiling from 'the power of feminine taste' (138).

Questions of scale inform the next two chapters. Thomas Stothard's illustrations of Robert Bloomfield, Byron, and George Crabbe, Sandro Jung argues, are small-scale engraved designs (vignettes) that allow the image to take priority in the reading process, one that 'enables first and foremost a visual experience of the text' (143). Maureen McCue's reading of Stothard's and J. M. W. Turner's illustrations of Samuel Rogers's *Italy*, sympathetically concludes that the 'gap between the verbal description and the illustrated vignette' encourages the 'reader-viewer to become an active participant in both the visual and verbal texts', thereby serving 'the needs of a more sophisticated audience than has previously been acknowledged' (193).

The expansion and democratisation of cultural experience underpins Ian Haywood's chapter on Thomas Macklin's Poets' Gallery. In an exemplary reading of William Artaud's anti-war image, *Mercy Stopping the Rage of War* (1794), Haywood demonstrates 'how illustration could be used to re-politicize "old canon" literature by transposing it into the revolutionary decade of the 1790s' (214). In a second chapter on Macklin's Poets' Gallery, Luisa Calè writes that 'collections of prints constituted museums without walls that had the potential to include the whole field of art' beyond the 'universal' concerns, advocated by Reynolds, of the classics and the Bible (222–21). Focusing on Maria Cosway's *Hours*, a painting retrofitted by Macklin as illustration for Gray's 'Ode on the Spring', Calè examines how the cosmopolitan aspirations of the literary galleries were curtailed in the post-revolutionary period by the return of an older 'aristocratic model of patronage of the arts' (236).

In her reading of Stothard, R. H. Cromek, and literary illustration on London's Newman Street, Mary L. Shannon considers the 'Artists' Street' as network, showing how 'interactions between art and literature played out on the ground' (243), fostering shifting and unstable relationships between painters and engravers, texts and images. Shannon offers the volume's most sustained demonstration of how Romantic illustration contributed to the destabilising of traditional artistic hierarchies. Equally, Brian Maidment's complementary account of *Arliss's Pocket Magazine* (1818–1833) shows how a modest magazine adopted a range of engraving techniques to produce high quality images for an expanded readership and viewership, anticipating the rise of professional illustrators in the 1830s and beyond.

In a provocative coda, Martin Myrone displaces the emphasis placed by art historians on the great painters of the sublime to suggest that readers might speculate on how commercial and democratic impulses can sometimes collude in the loss to society 'of heroic, virtuous action' (297). For Myrone, Fuseli's assertion, that 'he who has no visible object of worship is indifferent about modes, and rites and places', is as good a rejoinder as any to those who, suspicious of the sacred calling of art, would overlook 'the costs as well as the benefits of the "democratization of British art"' (297).

*Philip Shaw*
*University of Leicester*

## Jonas Cope, *The Dissolution of Character in Late Romanticism, 1820-1839*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. Pp. 248. £80. ISBN 9781474421300.

Jonas Cope's monograph provides a comprehensive account of how the concept of character developed during the Reform Era, at a time when idiosyncratic genres proliferated and writers created radical literary experiments. He argues that authors threw the stability, meaning, and

legibility of character into doubt by providing an alternative to texts in which readers could scan the surface to find depths in a coherent self (4–5). As Cope writes, '[c]haracter began to circulate as a concept whose ready appropriation in new print media and new scientific disciplines was strangely at odds with its unreliability as a holder of value' (11). He analyses character across an eclectic and impressive range of texts, including 'familiar essays, auto/biographies, poems, "poetical illustrations", engravings, annuals, novels of manners, fashionable novels, novels of ideas, closet dramas, "sketches" of London life and unclassifiable hybrids like Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–4)' (3). In seven chapters and a substantial Afterword, Cope elaborates on the rich nuances of character, offering incisive close readings of individual texts and drawing compelling links between a dizzying array of writers.

The first two chapters establish a foundation for Cope's argument by laying out the literary, scientific, and intellectual contexts in which character evolved as a 'vexed' concept during the 1820s and 30s (49). These chapters advance a sweeping interdisciplinary portrait of this debate among well-known literary writers (Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Walter Scott), thinkers (John Stuart Mill, August Comte, and Harriet Martineau), and philosophers (David Hume, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Jeremy Bentham). The next five chapters and the Afterword build on this foundation and offer specific case studies of character in texts by Scott, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Hartley Coleridge, Landon, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Thomas Love Peacock, Charles Dickens, and Carlyle. In chapter three, Cope examines Scott's novel *Old Mortality* and Lamb's *Essays of Elia* as 'postmodern experiments' that expose the fictionality, constructedness, and arbitrary nature of character (75). Chapter four investigates Hazlitt's view that character is a fixed and unified principle governed by a congenital 'bias', which contrasts with his portrayal of character in the experimental work *Liber Amoris.* The fifth chapter covers Hartley Coleridge's poetic engagement with Lucretius's materialism in imagining the dissolution of character and corporeality as a type of freedom (what Keats calls 'the feel of not to feel it') (135).

Next, Cope goes beyond Landon's widely studied love poems to consider how her letters, novels, verse, essays, and footnotes contradict one another, suggesting that inconsistency of character is neutral in value, rather than morally dubious. Chapter seven reflects on how Beddoes and Peacock push the radical dissolution of character to its limits in *Death's Jest-Book* and *Crotchet Castle*. The Afterword focuses on Dickens' *Sketches by Boz* and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* as bridge texts between the Reform Era's instability of character across innovative genres and the unity of character in Victorian realist novels. Dickens's Boz and Carlyle's unnamed editor exude 'an ironic sense of confidence and authority, drawing attention to characterisation as an arbitrary and political act even as [the writers try] to convince readers that the fictional beings in the text are possible or probable representations of living beings in the world' (193).

One point Cope touches on that would reward further investigation is the connection between the need for people to read character in order to navigate the class system and the major political reforms and working-class activism of the Reform Era. Cope draws on the Introduction to Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning's *Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment* in his brief discussion of character reading. He notes their 'claim that in the eighteenth century the "legibility of character" was a "crucial issue" and an "ai[d] to survival." Stronger character-readers simply had better chances of social and economic prosperity' (19). He also quotes a writer for *The Oriental Herald* who calls 'knowledge of character […] the only instrument of success upon which we can rely' as a 'science, which holds the golden keys of fortune and power' (34). During this politically turbulent period, did character reading became less essential (and thus character lost its stability) as British society grew more democratised, especially with the passage of acts like the 1832 Reform Bill? It would be worthwhile for academics to build on Cope's fascinating genealogy of character by exploring the class and political implications of his findings.

Through its ambitious scope and dense analysis, Cope's monograph makes an outstanding case that scholars should take the literature of the Reform Era and its portrayal of character seriously. Along with offering an exciting addition to recent scholarship on perceptions of character during the nineteenth century, Cope persuades readers that this period of literary history and its heterogenous material are richly deserving of critical notice.

*Indu Ohri*
*Boston University*

## Jeffrey N. Cox, *William Wordsworth, Second-Generation Romantic: Contesting Poetry after Waterloo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xiii + 260. £75. ISBN 9781108837613.

Jeffrey N. Cox's *William Wordsworth, Second-Generation Romantic: Contesting Poetry after Waterloo* contends that William Wordsworth, first-generation Romantic poet, was involved actively in the literary culture of Britain, past the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, until his death in 1850. This revisionist study builds on Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (1998), as Cox acknowledges, and explores Wordsworth's development as a poet beyond 1815. The book focuses on Wordsworth's poetic dialogues with younger contemporaries, including Leigh Hunt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and Lord Byron, among others, and their literary responses to Wordsworth's work. Subsequently, Wordsworth's responses to these younger poets justify the case for responding to his later work as that of a second-generation Romantic. While Wordsworth is the book's primary focus, Cox also pays attention to the poetic output of Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Hunt throughout. Notable poetic works examined in addition to Wordsworth's own poetry include Byron's *Childe Harold III*; Shelley's 'Alastor', *Peter Bell the Third*, and 'Mont Blanc'; Keats's 'The Fall of Hyperion'; and various pieces from Hunt's oeuvre.

Cox reads post-1815 Wordsworth as responding to the ideology and market domination of the Cockney School poets and, simultaneously, reacting to contemporary events in his own writing. Cox argues, in Chapter 1, that Wordsworth's *The Excursion* prompted a series of literary responses from the younger poets. For example, Byron created the anti-thesis of Wordsworth's solutions to despondency through *Childe Harold III* and *Don Juan* while the other Cockney School poets equally responded to Wordsworth through their own smaller 'excursions'. In the writings of these younger poets, Wordsworth's advocacy of spirituality as a balm to political failure and despondency is substituted for an eroticised beauty, found at the core of reality, as a salve to political disappointment. Additionally, Wordsworth's contemporary relevance as a poet in this era is highlighted by the widespread dissemination and reception of his work in post-Waterloo literary circles.

Chapter 2 offers an examination of developments around Wordsworth's *Thanksgiving Ode*, published in 1816 as a response to the Battle of Waterloo. Wordsworth's ode, for its part, alludes to Hunt's *Descent of Liberty* which, in turn, evokes Robert Southey. Cox uses this network of allusions to establish the active inter-generational literary dialogue between these Romantic poets. An abiding awareness of Wordsworth and his writings is, as Cox suggests, a continual and underpinning presence in works by the Cockney School of Poetry. Cox argues that the Cockney School poets deliberately cultivated their ideology and style in contrast to the older Lake School poets, especially Wordsworth and Southey.

Cox investigates the responses that Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* drew from second-generation Romantic poets in Chapter 3, most notably Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third*. Cox suggests that the character of Peter Bell is an anti-Byronic hero and claims that Wordsworth defined his ideological position against Byron (who was outselling him). This suggestion is an

intriguing one, because it presents an alternate perspective on Wordsworth's sudden publication of *Peter Bell* in 1819. Cox further explores the implications of the anti-Byronic Peter Bell for Wordsworth's profession of faith and how it shaped his own poetics.

Wordsworth's rejection of Shelley's atheism and scepticism is explored in Chapter 4. Wordsworth's inability to acknowledge the success of Cockney School writers, Cox claims, results from an ideological disagreement and not out of egotism. In Chapter 5, Cox reassesses Wordsworth's renewed confidence in Britain during his tour of Italy in 1837. There are also novel analyses of Wordsworth's retrospective style of composition in *Yarrow Revisited* (Chapter 4) and 'Memorials of a Tour in Italy, 1837' (Chapter 5). Cox's study here offers fresh insight into Wordsworth's late style by accounting for its many religious and aesthetic concerns, as shaped by a responsiveness to the poetry of second-generation Romantic poets.

A few minor quibbles: Cox, perhaps, overplays the inter-generational rivalry and ideological wedge between the Lake and Cockney poets, especially as Cox admits that he cannot directly prove that Wordsworth read all the texts to which this study claims Wordsworth is responding. Nonetheless, Cox's study presents a much needed and valuable reassessment of Wordsworth's late poetic career. Cox does not shy away from acknowledging the ideological conservatism of the older Wordsworth and offers both original insights into the poet's later, and often critically neglected, poetic works to signal both fascinating avenues for future research and to rethink the parameters of new historical approaches to Romantic literary culture. By categorising Wordsworth as a second-generation romantic, Cox creates a new poetic identity for Wordsworth, who succeeds the 'first-generation' Romantic after Waterloo. Cox's study closely records Wordsworth as not only responsive to, but also directly engaged with, second-generation poets of the Romantic era and thereby offers new and important dimensions to the field of Wordsworth scholarship and Romanticism more widely.

*Keerthi Sudhakar Vasishta*
*Durham University*

## Mike Goode, *Romantic Capabilities: Blake, Scott, Austen, and the New Messages of Old Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 302. £77.00. ISBN 9780198862369.

Mike Goode's *Romantic Capabilities: Blake, Scott, Austen, and the New Messages of Old Media* demonstrates the value of placing older media ecologies in conversation with newer ones. As the Epilogue succinctly puts it, '*Romantic Capabilities* advocates analyzing what a text *has become* in one media ecology and leveraging it into a historicist research strategy for recognizing and perhaps discovering for the first time what the text *potentially was*' (p. 251, emphasis original). Goode offers a sort of reverse engineering of the medial complexities of William Blake, Walter Scott, and Jane Austen by beginning with later responses to and experimentations with their work: Blake-based movies and coffee mugs, Scott-inspired nineteenth-century panoramas and stereographs, and Janeite fanfaction. Across the book's three parts, Goode argues that preoccupations with mediality – what new media scholars often describe as 'hypermediacy' – are key 'capabilities' of Romantic texts, with these dormant capabilities waiting to be surfaced and actualized in later media. Thus, Goode demonstrates that concepts like virality and virtual reality associated with our twenty-first century 'new media' landscape are hitherto unrecognized components of Romanticism's 'old media' environment.

Goode's ideas shine in his examinations of virality and Blake in Part I's two chapters. Goode argues 'against the idea of an initiated Blake reader', and instead points to the powerful (political) potential of the viral spread of Blake's work, especially his proverbs (p. 61). Tracking

Blake through a variety of unexpected places, including *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* and computer viruses of the 1990s, Goode shows that Blake's proverb forms create unstable reading formations that also create 'an enormous rhizomatic formation of readers, hearers, reciters, writers, and co-opters' (p. 61). Goode offers a new perspective on popular culture and reception history through the lens of media studies and media archeology.

Focusing on the visual elements of Walter Scott's poems and fiction, Chapter 4 (the only chapter in Part II) highlights the immersive aspects and hypermediacy of Scott's work as well as of the panoramas and stereographs that drew directly and indirectly on Scott. In their hypermediacy awareness, works from poems and panoramas to Scottish histories and stereographs call attention to themselves not just as media but as visual, immersive media. Goode offers an especially engaging history of the stereoscope and its importance as both a new media form and a tool that fundamentally altered nineteenth-century understandings of vision – understandings of vision that Goode suggests were present in Scott's works and Romantic discourse well before the advent of the stereoscope.

The two chapters in Part III focus on Austen's fanfiction and landscape. Rather than seeing the 1990s internet boom (and Colin Firth's wet-shirted Mr. Darcy of the same era) as the instigators of Janeite fandoms, Goode sees modern media as helping to actualize elements already within Austen's novels. This approach, building on work by scholars like Deidre Lynch, Devoney Looser, and Kathryn Sutherland, recognizes that Austen's recent reception in many ways replicates earlier fannish behaviors and, importantly, the novels themselves. Goode contends that fanfiction focused on reimagining and expanding Austenian estates highlights how Austen's fiction itself functions 'as a design medium whose medial relation to the potentials of canonical place or universe is contingent' (p. 212).

Goode's final chapter explores the rich question: 'To what extent is Austenian realism theorizing itself through, or in relation to, Regency landscape gardening, a highly visible form of contemporaneous design that, whatever its sinister political effects, was advancing a philosophically novel and potentially radical conception of reality?' (p. 232). Goode's answer draws on a wealth of Romantic-era theories of landscape design to inform an exciting interpretation of *Mansfield Park*. Yet other questions remain, particularly in the context of ongoing reassessments of Austen's engagement with imperialism and the racism of some Austen fandoms. One wonders, for instance, how the 'philosophically novel and potentially radical conceptions of reality' that Goode thoughtfully explores were informed by the 'sinister political effects' that he acknowledges. While Goode believes that 'close attention to the political commentaries that fanfictions make deflects critical attention from the messages of fanfiction's mediacy' (p. 233), there might be a middle ground – one that seeks to understand how philosophical questions about mediacy and media ecologies are informed by and also shape political ecologies.

Perhaps, though, these remaining questions embody Goode's own generative concept of 'capabilities' – possibilities that remain present, waiting to be activated. Building on Goode's interdisciplinary examination of hypermediacy in Romanticism, future scholars will be better positioned to realize new approaches to old media. Indeed, Goode's important book speaks to a growing trend to recognize the theoretical and historical capabilities of placing our own media moment into conversations with the nineteenth century and, in doing so, he invites us to uncover additional capabilities within Romantic and media studies.

*Lindsey Eckert*
*Florida State University*