Richard C. Sha and Joel Faflak, eds., *Romanticism and Consciousness Revisited*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Pp. 416. 14 illus. £95. ISBN 9781474485104.

This collection commemorates *Romanticism and Consciousness*, the volume of essays edited by Harold Bloom first published more than fifty years ago. Its editors, Richard C. Sha and Joel Faflak, pay tribute to the earlier volume, but even as they do so they consign it to the past. Consciousness for Bloom, Hartman, Abrams and their fellows was immaterial. To be conscious was to be aware of a painful separation from the world one inhabited. But the contributors to the new volume are cognizant of developments in neuroscience that have transformed our understanding of consciousness, which we now recognize as embodied and extended. Consciousness is a part of the world rather than disjoined from it. It may even be, as adherents to the panpsychism entertained by several contributors claim, the faculty in which all living things, human, animal, vegetable, even, it may be, geological, participate.

In 1970 it seemed (it is less evident now) that Bloom and his fellow contributors were engaged in something like a common enterprise. It is hard to believe that readers will ever think of the team that Sha and Faflak has assembled as sharing an agenda. The editors cooperate in their introduction to the volume, but in their individual contributions they diverge. Faflak celebrates Percy Shelley as a proto-Lacanian (*The Triumph of Life* is for him 'a kind of prelude to *Ecrits*'), whereas for Sha William Blake's poems of experience are valuable because they mediate between consciousness as we now understand it and the consciousness that a critic such as Hartman thought of Wordsworth as exploring. He evidently thinks of his own enterprise in similar terms. Blake's pages, Sha remarks, very often seem divided, and several of the essays in the collection seem divided too. In Julie Carlson's essay the account of Coleridge's *The Friend* seems scarcely related to the moving discussion of the value and the difficulty of cultivating friendships across racial divides with which the essay ends. Several contributors register a sense of strain as they bring together Romantic texts and modern neuroscience that sometimes results in essays of daunting difficulty. The most opaque (there are competitors) is Jacques Khalip's meditation on the fable in which Kant imagines himself in a dark room which would have been familiar except that a friend has playfully rearranged all the objects it contains. As I read through the essay I shared Kant's bewilderment. The problem is confronted directly by Lisa Zunshine in her beguiling essay on Hoffman's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. Our own conceptual frameworks, she argues, are best tested when brought to bear on authors to whom those frameworks were unavailable.

Faflak and Sha praise Bloom's collection, but theirs is a funeral eulogy. Some of their contributors think otherwise. Alan Richardson would have seemed the obvious choice to open the volume. It was Richardson, after all, whose work on the medical discourses of the Romantic period did so much to reattach Romantic minds and bodies. But Richardson presents his own essay, a study of those moments in Romantic writing when actions seem to evade consciousness, when things happen 'unaware', as a complement rather than a counter to the essay by Hartman that he most admires in Bloom's volume. In my favourite of these essays Nancy Yousef takes two scenes, one from *Middlemarch* and one from *Romola*, one painterly, the other an account of a painting, and reads them as offering a quiet lesson on how George Eliot would like her own novels to be read, a model lesson because the advice offered is so uncoercive. It is an essay that Hartman would have enjoyed.

One difference between the two collections is unexpected. Many of Bloom's contributors share a tragic view of life, unsurprisingly given how central the Holocaust was in their experience. By contrast a number of the essays here share an impulse towards what Khalip calls the 'ecstatic.' Colin Jager's sympathies are with William Blake when he shouts his joy in an ecstatic present. The tendency culminates in the essays on 'Race and Consciousness' by

Kate Singer and Humberto Garcia. Singer in particular writes a lyrical prose that merges with the voice of Asia in *Prometheus Unbound* as she ushers into existence Shelley's version of a panpsychic world in which all humankind have joined with each other and with the world they inhabit. But the volume includes, too, an essay on *The Cenci* in which Yasmin Solomonescu reminds us that the dream that boundaries between selves might be dissolved might itself become the stuff of nightmare, as Beatrice discovers when she is raped by her father. The editors of this volume note that Bloom's collection was dominated by essays on 'the Big Six'. Their own is more various, but five of the Big Six retain their prominence. One of them, Byron, is all but excised from the volume. He merits only five cursory references.

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