Please note: another review of *Romantic Epics and the Mission of Empire* already appeared in *BARS Review* issue 60. The inclusion of two reviews of the same book arose because of a change in the journal's editorship.

Matthew Leporati, *Romantic Epics and the Mission of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. 280. £85. ISBN 9781009285186.

Matthew Leporati's *Romantic Epics and the Mission of Empire* is a worthy addition to the Cambridge Studies in Romanticism series. The book outlines the complex intertwining of the vast imperial and missionary projects through the long nineteenth century, arguing reasonably for the multifaceted but always ambivalent response to those projects through the epic verse produced in the genre's late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century resurgence. Leporati is keen to see poets' attitudes toward empire and the missionary project reflected not only in the content of the epics he surveys, but in their formal structures, whether simply (as in their choice of conservative couplets or more radical Miltonic blank verse) or more complexly figured, as suggested in the play between Yearsley's brief *Brutus* and the whole of her *Rural Lyre,* or as demonstrated in Leporati's deft readings of enjambement in *Don Juan*.

Leporati provides a set of useful introductory chapters, first addressing the usual questions and inherent conflicts of Romantic epic—interiority, fragmentation, the role of the poet, the death of epic, and the dominating role played by Milton; second, sketching the thorny, interlocking history of the evangelical revival and the expanding empire; and third, providing an overview of 1790s epic. These discussions provide helpful background for understanding his focus on epics that maintain an exteriorising turn, and suggest, as he notes, a 'trajectory of approaches' that later chapters illuminate more fully. The well-balanced chapters that follow address Ann Yearsley's *Brutus*, Robert Southey's *Madoc*, Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative,* William Blake's *Milton*, and (in one chapter) both Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Byron's *Don Juan.* In each of these textual encounters—and it is to Leporati's credit that he never loses sight of the particular texts involved—the reader is led to focus on scenes of conversion, where (in simplest terms) the conquering hero shares his inward vision of future union, to be grasped with grateful admiration by the conquered. Each of Leporati's poets explores and renegotiates this type of troubling scene with varying degrees of skepticism and ambivalence, whether through direct identification with the conquered, through critique and questioning of conquest, through foregrounding issues of hybridity, or through other, more radical subversions of authority. A brief epilogue concludes the book, an epilogue which surprisingly, despite the early mention of Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, falls into the familiar trap of declaring epic poetry 'supplanted' by film after the Victorian period.

As with any large and complicated project carried out over an extended period of time, there are some issues. I am puzzled by the index, which omits many scholars discussed as well as those merely cited, and by small errors in the bibliography. Leporati seems to take F. A. Wolf's early hypotheses on the basic orality of Homeric composition almost as assumed knowledge for his time period, when that was far from the case. (As Barrett Browning suggested a little later, if the *Iliad* was produced 'by mere fortuitous concourse of old songs, Conclude as much too for the universe'.) Occasionally, the weight of three complexly interwoven projects—the British empire, the Protestant evangelical mission, the English epic—threatens to overwhelm the argument, or a brief digression that made more sense in an early article has been left to ensnare the unwary. Overall, however, the book is a sound contribution, and Leporati signposts his argument well and brings the reader safely back to shore.

Jeremy M. Downes