

Jens Martin Gurr and Berit Michel, eds., *Romantic Cityscapes: Selected Papers from the Essen Conference of the German Society for English Romanticism*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013. Pp. 263. €28.50 (pb). ISBN 9783868214895.

Paul Westover, *Necromanticism: Travelling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp. 217. £53. ISBN 9780230304437.

These two books contribute to a growing literature redefining and broadening the definition of Romanticism in recent years. As Pascal Fischer explains in his contribution to *Romantic Cityscapes*, ‘the very title of this volume [...] bears testimony to [this] redefinition’ of Romanticism ‘in the singular’ ‘synonymous’ with the ‘Big Six’, to plural Romanticisms (203). Shifting the emphasis from the natural countryside to the industrial city, the papers collectively explore how ‘*la condition urbaine* affect[s] human individuality, society, and cultural production’ in this period (8).

The volume succeeds in depicting plural Romanticisms on multiple levels, not least through its urban focus. The book explores an impressive array of literary forms, from Ian Duncan’s wide-ranging discussion of serial publication in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (33-43) to Fischer’s focus on Anti-Jacobin novelists, often overlooked in favour of their more radical counterparts (203-15); from Frederick Burwick’s exploration of staged adaptations of Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (147-55) to Cian Duffy’s insights into Carsten Niebuhr’s and Edward Daniel Clarke’s travelogues (249-55). Taken in aggregate, *Romantic Cityscapes* presents a good balance of canonical and non-canonical, male and female authors. While London predictably features heavily in the book, it also includes discussions of more marginal metropolitan spaces, not least the suburban spaces of Cambridge (67-77) and Bath (33). Duncan’s focus on the competing cityscape of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh* acts as a companion piece to Anthony John Harding’s essay on the *London Metropolitan Magazine*, which also succeeds in keeping ‘secondary towns of the kingdom’ in view (167-68). Katharina Rennhak’s portrayal of the ‘national unspecificity of Dublin’ (197) in the romances of Anne Plumtre, Sydney Owenson and Maria Edgeworth is another important contribution for this reason.

However, there are limitations to these plural Romanticisms. Arguably, there is an imbalance in the number of reappraisals of the conventionally rural aesthetics of Wordsworth in the volume: Julian Wolfreys, Torsten Caeners, Mark Bruhn, Kiyoshi Nishiyama, and Joel Faflak all address this to varying degrees of sophistication. In Caener’s essay, especially, this Wordsworthian emphasis threatens to outweigh and diminish his titular focus on Mary Robinson. Similarly, the Spaniard Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella’s impressions of London, discussed in Wolfreys’ excellent opening essay, are significantly those of a fictional persona of the English author Robert Southey rather than of an actual foreigner (20-21). If Rennhak presents Dublin’s Irish locality as a conspicuous absence in the texts themselves, this also serves to highlight the absence of any discussion of Cardiff or of other British imperial cities in the volume. That this is recognised by the editors is suggested by the placement of Duffy’s essay at the end of the collection, which is alone in focussing on a foreign cityscape, Istanbul, as if Duffy’s essay points towards a more cosmopolitan emphasis for future colloquiums.

These limitations are combatted, however, by the emphatic interdisciplinarity of the selected papers, which map the Romantic city from various angles, combining multiple disciplines to offer a well-rounded picture (10-11). Drawing on the discourses of history, archaeology, architecture, art, theatre and medicine, the papers collectively mimic an urban

sprawl. Markus Poetzsch's summary of Leigh Hunt's urban philosophy or 'townosophy' as 'not a body of knowledge to be attained solely by [...] conventional modes of research', but 'a peripatetic epistemology, a way of knowing the world by walking it, threading it together and mapping it', provides an accurate description of many of the critical approaches evidenced here (141).

Several of the essays concentrate particularly on 'peripatetic epistemolog[ies]' and in doing so defy scholarly convention in Romantic Studies. Both Poetzsch and Mihaela Irimia are informed by Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (140, 175), while Rolf Lessenich and Harding separately construct Charles Lamb as flâneur. Lessenich rallies against previous representations of Lamb as 'domesticated city flâneur', conjuring him up as 'a free flâneur of the type of the drug addicts De Quincey and Baudelaire' instead, comparing Lamb's love of London to 'Baudelaire's orgiastic *bain de multitude*' (130, 128). Harding also includes the implied reader of Lamb's and Hazlitt's essays as complicit in this peripatetic philosophy – 'ha[ving] something of the *flâneur* and something of the art connoisseur' about him (171). Further drawing on the practice of *flânerie*, Torsten Caener's juxtaposition of Wordsworth's rural and Georg Simmel's urban aesthetics as essentially two sides of the same coin, if encroaching on Mary Robinson's status, nevertheless offers an original take on the Lake poet (53-59). As Wolfreys astutely observes, this emphasis on urban walking practices 'signifies a shift from constative to performative discourse', a shift which these essays correspondingly represent in Romantic studies (23). The application of modernist and poststructuralist theories of walking in the city gives the movement a decidedly modern flavour, emphasising the 'porous borders' of Romanticism and Victorianism (24).

Furthering this deconstruction of Romantic/Victorian binaries, although through the perspective of graveside nostalgia rather than citywide progression, is Paul Westover's rigorously researched *Necromanticism*. Westover 'take[s] up the story [...] of long Romanticism' by providing a history of literary tourism from 1750 through to 1860 (142) that similarly emphasises 'performative' Romanticism; this time in terms of tourists' 'act[ing] out their reading' beside author's headstones and memorials (151). A crucial development in the field of literary tourism, Westover's book views this phenomenon as part of a more general Romantic obsession with the dead. Further nuancing Nicola Watson's analysis of the graveside origins of literary tourism, Westover argues that 'graves were not only first, but also paradigmatic' (5), with '[b]urial grounds and libraries becom[ing] symbolic equivalents' (53). Westover coins the term 'necromanticism' to refer to 'a complex of antiquarian revival, book-love, ghost-hunting, and monument-building that emerged in the age of revolutions and mass print' (3). Although a literary historian 'by training', Westover explores necromanticism from multiple perspectives, having consulted travel historians, sociologists, thanatologists and anthropologists during the book's development (9). The book similarly takes in a wide range of literary forms from the poem to the essay and from the travelogue to the critically neglected illustration book in a broad definition of travel literature.

Westover's book is particularly insightful in providing literary touristic practices with a theoretical underpinning. He reads the Romantics' obsession with reliquaries as an extension of Lord Kames' concept of 'ideal presence' in *Elements of Criticism* (1762), wherein Kames argues that literature derives its force from its ability to convince readers of the reality of the fictional world (18). Even when Westover is stepping on trodden critical ground, he provides a fresh perspective through subtle analysis. While Chapter 2 relays a relatively straightforward history of the development of literary tourism, for example, Westover's contestation of the 'secularization thesis' of literary pilgrimage, or 'Romantic literary tourism as a straightforward, secular replacement of a sacred practice' (33), probes deeply into the psychology of the literary tourist, going beyond earlier scholarship in the field. Astutely, Westover links literary pilgrimage with Benedict Anderson's location of the

cultural origins of nationalism in death (70). William Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), discussed in Chapter 3, emphasises the nationalistic ideologies underpinning literary tourism even among radicals: Godwin's 'vision of community' is 'a republic of letters built on shared reverence for canonized forefathers' (65). Chapter 4 explores more personal motivations for literary pilgrimage, construing Felicia Hemans's graveside conversations as both 'instruments of literary canonization' and '(auto)canonization' (78, 83).

Westover describes the book as 'stretch[ing] at its seams' (11) and while this adequately represents the wealth of Westover's own research, it is also perhaps a commentary on the book's less than perfect structure. Many original insights are crammed into a questionably located 'Interlude' (92-106). Moreover, although Westover convincingly argues for Sir Walter Scott being foregrounded in his final chapter on illustrated books, no such reasons are given for his choice of Godwin's essay. While a refreshing departure from more canonical accounts, the selection of *Essay on Sepulchres*, which Westover admits was relatively neglected in Godwin's own time as the main emphasis for a 'core chapter' would benefit from greater elucidation (12). Notably absent from the book is any extended textual analysis of domestic travelogues. In fact, Westover's more traditional treatment of the 'quotation work' (117) or intertextuality of American travelogues about Britain in Chapter 5 is arguably the most cohesive. However, these slight imperfections are simply consequences of the breadth of Westover's contribution to a relatively new critical field. As with *Romantic Cityscapes*, *Necromanticism* is valuable reading for nineteenth-century scholars across the disciplines of the humanities.

Rebecca Butler
Bangor University