Andrew Franta, *Systems Failure: The Uses of Disorder in English Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019. Pp. 215. $57. ISBN 9781421427515.

Andrew Franta's *Systems Failure* is a captivating book about the breakdown of order and organisation in writing and thinking across the long eighteenth century. In the spirit of its own topic, the book does not make one fixed argument but instead spins together a series of related threads. First, there is an argument of intellectual history: 'While we tend to regard skepticism about systems as postmodern', Franta writes, 'stories about the drive to order the world and its inevitable unravelling like those told by [Jorge Luis] Borges and [Lewis] Carroll have their roots in the eighteenth century' (2). The book locates a critique of modern systems thinking in a literary tradition (Franta's term) composed of prose—mainly narrative prose—running from Johnson and Sterne through to Godwin, Austen, and De Quincey. Second, there is a literary-critical argument to the effect that we tend to overstate the systematic nature of literary works themselves, often because we rush to locate 'the novelistic representation of social reality' and, blinkered by the logic of realism, overlook 'the literary analysis of the idea that society *has* a structure' (13, my emphasis). Third, and most abstract, is an intriguing argument about the difficulty of thinking about disorder at all. This argument emerges, often implicitly, in Franta's careful and sustained treatment of recent criticism, as when he notes how, in Jonathan Lamb's and James Chandler's analyses of Sterne, 'the pressure of critical scrutiny resolves contingency into complexity', as if the very work of literary analysis can't help but find order in disorder and logic in chance events, even as Sterne sends up precisely those tendencies in his narrative (63). When Franta observes, with reference to De Quincey's capacious analytic style, that 'Systems are fictions, but they are necessary—or at least unavoidable', he might also be speaking of literary analysis at large (16).

But what is a system? The examples are diverse: there is the 'closed system' of biography (20) into which Johnson wrestles his *Life of Savage* in chapter one, until the *Life* starts to look like 'a concerted effort to test the limits of the genre, and Savage himself becomes a kind of experimental subject designed to challenge the reader's ability to sympathise' (36). There is the concrete infrastructure of the postal system, which structures Franta's compelling reading of Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* and reappears in the superb chapter on De Quincey, where the mail in 'The English Mail Coach' 'comes to serve as a figure for social systems in general' (136). At times, systems thinking reveals 'the desire to apply principles derived from the natural sciences to the social world' (167); elsewhere it stands for the systematisation of the social world in opposition to the contingencies of fiction (133). What unites these various systems is a general claim that 'system-building requires a closed frame of reference', as opposed to the open-ended theorising about life and lives, embedded in literary forms, that the book celebrates (154).

These readings are incisive, concentrated affairs. Where a more sentimental critique of systems might focus on individuals and their inner lives, Franta prioritises social arrangement over psychological reflection and spatial arrangement over temporal patterning. The effect is to subordinate plot and character to more impersonal questions of social and formal organisation. His defence of Smollett's 'notoriously flat' characters finds that flatness to be compatible with Bruno Latour's flat ontology of Actor Network Theory, observing that 'in *Humphry Clinker* individuals are often treated as abstractions, as if they were data points or connecting notes rather than real people' (68). Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, a gothic tale of excessive curiosity, is read not as psychological thriller but as an epistemological warning. Even Austen is read not for the inner lives of her characters but the formal arrangement of scenes and relationships. Indeed, the book offers some surprising and lovely formal readings; the discussion of chiasmus in Johnson and the schematic, algebraic analysis of a scene in

Mansfield Park stand out in particular.

Franta shows how literary works can play with, and resist, the totalising systems that might seek to explain or order society, but his own methods are far from dilettante or unsystematic. Latour, the most prominent theorist in the book, has a similarly ambivalent relationship to systematic thought in recent work (see the note 'Is AIME a system?' on Latour's *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* website). The book's title hints at the complexity of the conceptual territory: disorder is not the opposite of system, and not all systems are stable. As Franta observes, 'ambivalence is an intrinsic feature of the emergence of systems' (3). Even as the book traces a literary history of opposition to emergent systematic knowledge, it points the way towards fruitful, critical engagement between literary criticism and social theory in the present.

Alexander Freer
University of Edinburgh

Noah Heringman, *Deep Time: A Literary History*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2023. Pp. 384. £30. ISBN 9780691235790.

In *Deep Time: A Literary History*, Noah Heringman offers a compelling account of the emergence of 'deep time' as both a scientific and literary concept, tracing its development from the long eighteenth century to Darwin's formulation of human evolution in *The Descent of Man* (1871). Traversing natural history, antiquarianism, poetic form, voyage narratives, and scientific romance, Heringman argues that deep time is not the exclusive outcome of geology as a modern science, but rather a composite, cross-disciplinary construct shaped as much by narrative techniques, oral traditions, and speculative philosophies as by stratigraphic measurement. The result is a rethinking of what it means to historicise time—and a challenge to views that confine deep time to the empirical frameworks of post-Enlightenment geology.

Heringman argues that deep time was imagined before it was measured, and that literature was not merely a vehicle for transmitting scientific discoveries but a generative force in shaping long-scale temporal thought. The book's key figures—Reinhold and George Forster, Buffon, Herder, Blake, and Darwin—do not simply mirror an expanding temporal horizon; they actively participate in the construction of deep time as a cultural object resistant to disciplinary boundaries. A striking example is Heringman's discussion of the 'abyss of time', a concept commonly attributed to Buffon but, as he shows, one with a layered and debated history. Equally significant are the Blakean 'Ancient men', resonating with Buffon's 'First Men', whose imagined perspectives on origins complicate the relationship between prehuman and human time. This reinterpretive approach allows Heringman to develop what he terms a 'counterhistory' of deep time (1)—one that foregrounds the imaginative labour of poetry, romance, and ethnographic speculation alongside empirical observation.

The book is organised into four chapters, framed by a theoretically rich Introduction and a provocative Afterword. Chapter One traces geological and ethnographic entanglements in the Pacific voyage narratives of the Forsters, where ideas of primitive landforms intersect with conjectures about the origins of human society. Chapter Two turns to Buffon's *Epochs of Nature* (1778), arguing that its experimental geochronology and cometary cosmology offered one of the first systematic attempts to narrate Earth's history on a planetary scale. Heringman's reading of Buffon is particularly valuable, at once recovering the text's philosophical digressions and speculative gestures (often omitted or censored in later editions), and showing how Buffon's comet—responsible for throwing off planetary matter from the Sun—figures catastrophic origin and creative rupture.

This concern with origins and rupture also informs Chapter Three, which will be of particular interest to Romanticists. Heringman offers an original reading of William Blake's geogony, situating him within a strand of poetic and philosophical thought that registers deep time not as a stable scientific category but as a mythopoeic and visionary mode. He aligns the ballad revival and oral traditions with the emergence of a 'deep past of poetry' (120). Drawing on Herder's and Ritson's theories of cultural antiquity, Heringman demonstrates how eighteenth-century poets and philosophers reimagined poetic form itself as a kind of stratigraphy, in which layers of speech, myth, and memory encode lost human epochs. Seen in this light, Blake's *Songs*, prophetic books, and marginalia represent archival interventions into temporal scale, foregrounding the imaginative capacity to inhabit and remake time.

The final chapter considers Darwin and John Lubbock, reframing their evolutionary and anthropological works in light of the long prehistory of deep time as a conceptual field. Particularly striking is the suggestion that Darwin's encounter with indigenous peoples in Tierra del Fuego echoed earlier naturalist accounts that situated human origins within the same temporal and material field as fossil shells and cliffs. In this perspective, the Anthropocene

appears less a novelty than a return of the long-imagined unity of human and geological history—first articulated in literature, later formalised by climate science.

Heringman's method is erudite and persuasive. He combines close readings of canonical and neglected texts with incisive theoretical interventions, drawing on thinkers including Koselleck, Chakrabarty, Zielinski, and Rudwick. Notable is his insistence on figural and rhetorical dimensions of geological writing, which allow geological temporality to migrate into poetry, ethnography, and romance. Heringman thereby challenges Gould's view that deep time arose chiefly from the late-eighteenth-century rise of geology, defined by its separation from history. He recovers a pre-disciplinary space wherein Earth's history was conceived as a shared problem of scale, form, and narrative.

In the context of renewed attention to geological temporality, this book demonstrates with clarity and breadth how literature and science together shaped the idea of deep time. It is a valuable resource not only for scholars of Blake and Romanticism, but also for those interested in the broader intersections of literature, science, and intellectual culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and beyond.

Annalisa Volpone
University of Perugia

Owen Ware, *Return of the Gods: Mythology in Romantic Philosophy and Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. 280. £25.99. ISBN 9780197763964.

Middlemarch readers will tell you that a key to all mythologies is no light undertaking. Yet Ware sets out, in an ambitious book, to explain how Romantic authors proposed that new mythologies would resolve the crisis of the fragmented self. A humanity alienated from its world would lead Schiller to cry (as Sally Rooney fans know), 'Beautiful world, where are you?' Romantic primitivists envied humanity's lost sense of wholeness, but Romantics knew that the progress of the Enlightenment should not be set aside to embrace naivety. The old mythologies would not serve a humanity that had been altered irreversibly by monotheism, science, and philosophy. Hence, Ware writes, 'the romantics were working towards a hybrid theory of mythology, rewriting narratives of the self's journey to wholeness, such that the "truths" of mythology become explicit at higher levels of self-knowledge and self-understanding' (41). This hybridity is a Romantic attempt to reconcile primitivism—in which the ancients devised myths that articulated their interpretation of existence—with the later Platonism, which recognises such myths as projections of the mind rather than incontrovertible truths. Platonism is the dominant influence, as understood in Ware's examination of canonical Romantics.

Ware sets out the crisis of an alienated generation and the apparent solution lucidly and provides helpful definitions of his terms at the outset. 'Mythology', to Ware, encompasses not solely narrative that offers supernatural explanations for natural phenomena, or otherwise encodes aspects of our understanding of existence in stories, but also includes symbol in a general sense. For that reason, this book posits Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' and Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' as myth-making texts alongside more obvious candidates that rework Graeco-Roman material, as in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*. The commonality is that these works aspire to recover wholeness, with Unity of Being envisioned as the purpose of myth.

In showing us that, among key British and German Romantics, the project of a new mythology was a central preoccupation in response to the problem of self-estrangement, Ware establishes that works by Blake, Friedrich Schlegel, and Percy Bysshe Shelley seek to negotiate instances of contrariety in order to reunite the fragmented self. Accordingly, Ware demonstrates that conflict is key to Romantic mythology, although so too is sex, as in the racy turns of Schlegel's *Lucinde*. Irony functions as a metanarrative tool by which the reader reflects on the task of myth-making. The ascending spiral emerges as a *leitmotif* of Ware's study, as poetic figures undertake ostensibly circular journeys in which they achieve elevated perspectives on their origins. This journey occurs in various senses in Romanticism: as phantasmagoria in Novalis's fiction, the creation of new archetypes in Blake's work, Coleridge's identification of symbols, and the adaptation of Greek myth in texts by Hölderlin and Keats. Restorative myth is a goal towards which Romantics strive without always reaching it; the difficulties are such as Shelley foregrounds in *Prometheus Unbound*, of which Ware writes that the inscrutable character of Demogorgon represents the 'ineffable One at the basis of reality' (180).

Inevitably, the surveying approach of Ware's book takes in some literary realms which he seems to know more intimately than others. In asserting a concern with new mythology to be common among diverse writers, he displays a keener interest in German prose than in Anglophone poetry and its critical tradition. *BARS Review* readers might wonder whether a study of Keats's *Lamia*, or *The Fall of Hyperion*—which reflects on the replacement of old myth with new—might have been offered instead of close attention to *Endymion*, why the account of the 'Ancient Mariner' omits entirely the supernatural aspects that make the poem memorable, or why Blake is presented as though he wrote conventional texts for conventional

presses. This last point is important because Ware might have pursued the question of audience. The curious textual histories of Blake's works and Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' invite consideration of how their myth-making might serve a social purpose in comparison with, say, the egalitarian ideology Ware notes in *Lyrical Ballads*. Another avenue might take in the revival of interest in mystical inspiration during the eighteenth century, perspective on which would complicate the notion that there was a supercilious aspect to the Romantics' opinion of the ancients, which seems implicit in the proposal that they saw primitive myth as naive. While a list of omitted Romantic texts on myth that might have warranted inclusion would be a long one—Byron's and Coleridge's works on Cain, for instance—it is clear that Ware has learned from Casaubon's example by choosing a manageable dataset. The value of the book lies in the way it joins the dots and delineates a mode of thought that pervades Romanticism.

Chris Murray
Monash University

Deryl Davis, *Robert Pollock's* The Course of Time *and Literary Theodicy in the Romantic Age: The Rise and Fall of a Christian Epic*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2024. Pp. 239. £38.99. ISBN 97810325213101.

This book has the sort of title to which, in these days when findability rules, editors are greatly addicted. Milton's presence looms large in this book and, taken together, the title and subtitle might alarm the contemporary stall-reader as much as *Tetrachordon* did the seventeenth-century version that Milton censured in Sonnet XI. But the title reflects the fact that this book packs in a great deal.

Davis's work is of note, in the first instance, because it is the first book-length treatment of the Scottish poet Robert Pollock and his epic poem, *The Course of Time*. Neither Pollock or his poem have received a great deal of critical attention, and any work of criticism that endeavours to puts this text back on the radar of literary critics is to be welcomed. In fact, Davis does rather more than simply flag the importance of *The Course of Time*, though his Introduction does that very effectively. The opening chapters go on to offer a very helpful contextualisation of the poem as one of a number of efforts in 'Mitonic theodicy in the romantic age', reminding us of the importance of the 'Milton cult' in Romantic poetry, and placing Pollock's work in conversation with Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth, but especially Byron.

The Introduction is followed by an examination of Pollock's use of Milton. This chapter includes the interesting fact that, not uniquely among his contemporaries, Pollock claimed that Milton had appeared to him in a dream and (a more idiosyncratic assertion) that they had engaged in conversation about *Comus* (having pedantically insisted that my students refer to that work as *A Masque*, it pleased me immoderately to note that dream-Milton did not recognise *Comus* as a title). Davis makes a convincing case for Milton's importance, not just as an intertextual source, but as something of a guiding light for Pollock and helpfully nuances earlier critical assumptions about what, precisely, Pollock was doing with Milton.

The next chapter broadens the search for influences upon Pollock. Byron makes another appearance, this time as the author of 'Darkness', a poem to which Pollock reacted by writing a thousand words on the resurrection (62), which would eventually form part of *The Course of Time.* Davis also discusses John Dick, who had taught Pollock divinity, and whose model of the 'polemical divine' and defence of evangelical orthodoxy left their impress on his student. Finally, Davis considers the impact of Edward Irving. Irving was, by turns, a Scottish clergyman, a celebrity preacher, a proponent of sign gifts, and condemned heretic. Irving is a colourful character who adds interest and excitement to any chapter in which he appears. In this chapter, he is significant for his nine-part polemic *The Oracles of God: Four Orations for Judgement to Come,* and for his premillennial eschatology.

Chapter Four addresses 'religion and moral portraiture' in the poem, examining how it goes about achieving its homiletical and parenetic purpose. Davis unpacks Pollock's treatment of the essentials of religion, and especially his treatment of hell and his defence of the reality of eternal punishment, a live issue in Pollock's intellectual and religious context. Equally current was the issue of biblical authority, and it is to this area that Davis moves next, before moving to address Pollock's role as 'moral bard' and its expression in range of personifications and moral portraits.

'Sharpening weapons at the forge of Byron', the next chapter, discusses *The Course of Time* as a Romantic poem. There is a useful, if brief, discussion of the wider critical debate about the relationship between Romanticism and evangelical expression in the period, before Davis focuses specifically on the poem, highlighting the features that might be described as its Romantic credential, including, its treatment of the self, nature reverie, and the poem's apocalypticism.

The title of final chapter of the book echoes its subtitle and summarises the reception

history of the poem. This is more than a postscript—Davis's discussion of the poem's initial popularity and its precipitous and almost total fall into obscurity provides a fascinating insight into the changes of literary and critical taste: 'if the religiosity of *The Course of Time* was a primary reason for its success, it was also central to the poem's undoing' (187). While it seems unlikely that the poem will ever recover a wide readership, it is to be hoped that this valuable volume will at least ensure that it receives due attention from literary scholarship.

Mark S. Sweetnam
Trinity College Dublin

Kelvin Everest, Carlene Adamson, Will Bowers, Jack Donovan, Cian Duffy, Geoffrey Matthews, Mathelinda Nabugodi, Ralph Pite and Michael Rossington, eds, *Shelley: Selected Poems*. London and New York: Routledge, 2023. Pp. 900 (pb). £36.99. ISBN 9781405858199.

Routledge's new volume of selected poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley identifies the poet as author of 'some of the finest lyric poetry in the English Language' (i). It should come as no surprise, then, that editor Kelvin Everest has selected from the six-volume Longman Annotated edition of Shelley's work almost exclusively lyric poetry. Dramas like *The Cenci* and epics like *The Revolt of Islam* are omitted in order to make room for as much of Shelley's lyric poetry as possible. There are practical reasons for this, as including longer works—together with extensive headnotes and footnotes—would quickly fill the pages of a book that already stretches the limits of what can fit in a single volume. Even works like *Hellas*, so instrumental to understanding Shelley's engagement with philhellenism, just cannot get space.

However, there is more to Everest's singling out of lyric poetry than simple practicality. After all, the volume gives about 177 pages to *Prometheus Unbound*, complete with the author's preface and a lengthy critical discussion of the piece. Unlike Shelley's other dramas, though, *Prometheus Unbound* is far more engaged with lyric poetry than the conventions of comedy or tragedy, and in fact Shelley subtitled the work 'A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts' (106). For better or worse, Shelley is known today primarily as a writer of lyric poetry, and this volume solidifies his association with that genre. Specialists might guffaw over *Swellfoot the Tyrant* or be amused by the satire of William Wordsworth in *Peter Bell the Third*, but those works are omitted here, as this volume gives us the Shelley familiar to a more general audience.

Nonetheless, the extensive notes and annotations make this volume valuable to specialists as well, even though Routledge claims the book is 'an ideal anthology for students' (i). My own experience suggests this volume is far more suitable for graduate students than undergrads, as the notes and annotations—extensive as they are—still assume a level of knowledge beyond the general reader of today. As one example, the headnote to 'O! there are spirits of the air' refers to Hippolytus as being banished due to 'his mother's false accusation of rape' (4). More advanced students will know that Phaedra was the *step*mother of Hippolytus, making the alleged crime not quite as incestuous as it first appears. Given that the headnote and footnotes already exceed the length of the poem, it's understandable the editors did not feel the need to elaborate more on Greek myth, but the note might be a bit misleading to a less informed reader.

The editors have also provided plenty of opportunities for readers to compare poems. This volume includes different versions of 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' and 'Mont Blanc' for instance, and reprints in its entirety the sonnet by Horace Smith that might have influenced 'Ozymandias' (along with the description by Diodorus Siculus that provided a source for the poem's topic). When citing a poem in another language, the book provides the original and an English version, when possible a translation that Shelley himself might have read. When referencing a passage by Dante alluded to in 'Julian and Maddalo', for instance, the footnote gives a translation by Shelley's contemporary H.F. Cary (288). These small details help to place Romantic poetry in its historical context.

Headnotes are quite extensive, and typically give information about extant manuscripts, dates of composition, publication history, poetic form and structure, sources and influences, biographical context, and general criticism. While the depth and breadth of this information might overwhelm some students, it can be quite helpful at times. In introducing 'Ode to the West Wind', the headnote recognizes how the manuscript 'suggests that composition was carried on at different moments and in different circumstances, though not necessarily over a

long period of time' (353). This might be important for students as they navigate the speaker's profound shifts in mood from one section of the poem to another. Such notes are particularly helpful for some of Shelley's more difficult poems, such as 'The Triumph of Life' which is accompanied by an abundance of material (nearly 83 pages in all) to help readers tackle this ambiguous and unfinished late work.

Routledge has done a great service in providing poetic highlights from the extensive scholarship of the Longman edition in a single volume at a reasonable price. At £36.99 ($49.99 in the U.S.), the book is hardly cheap, but well worth its price for a serious student of Shelley's lyric poetry.

James Armstrong
City University of New York

Jonathon Shears and Alan Rawes, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Lord Byron*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. 727. £161. ISBN 9780198808800.

The Oxford Handbook of Lord Byron is a long-awaited addition to the Oxford Handbook series and to Byron studies, and it will not disappoint its readers. The nearly 800-page volume (including introductory material) contains 45 essays and is divided into five parts.

In Part I, 15 essays cover the major works, most of the lesser-known works, and some that are not really known. Shobhana Bhattacharji examines the poet's first two collections: *Fugitive Pieces* and *Poems Original and Translated*. Stephen Minta looks to the Mediterranean in a study of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I and II. Anna Camilleri explores how the orientalism of the Eastern Mediterranean subtly addresses issues of gender in the 'Turkish Tales'. Jonathon Shears examines Byron's lyric poetry, with a fine introduction establishing key contexts. Bernard Beatty pairs 'Chillon' and *Mazeppa*, then looking to 'Tasso' and 'Dante'. Philip Shaw traces 'Byron's fascination with exile and sublimity to poems written in response to the downfall of Napoleon and to the breakdown of his domestic relations'. Lilla Maria Crisafulli reads *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* IV and *Beppo* as two of Byron's most 'Italianate' poems. Arnold Anthony Schmidt turns to Byron's three major plays: *Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Sardanapalus*.

Drummond Bone examines the first four cantos of *Don Juan*. Subsequently, Diego Saglia argues that Cantos V-VIII 'form a close-knit narrative sequence'. Next, Gary Dyer examines the idea of transition in Cantos IX-XII. Jane Stabler then looks at the Norman abbey cantos through the lens of George Orwell. Mirka Horová examines *Manfred*, *Cain*, and *Heaven and Earth* through the interplay between metaphysical rebellion and strife between the characters and their supernatural counterparts. Matthew Ward looks at several of Byron's final works through the lens of 'Byron's Poetic Endings'. Anthony Howe turns his attention towards 'Byron's Letters'.

Part II begins with John Beckett's 'Byron the Aristocrat'. Moving through Byron's life, Roderick Beaton charts the geographical locations that helped place the poet at home. Next, Jeffery Vail looks at Byron's sexual activity and addresses some psychological manifestations. Andrew M Stauffer disentangles the real Byron from the myth created through his poetry.

Part III concerns literary and cultural contexts. Jonathan Sachs elucidates Byron's knowledge and understanding of classical poetics. Nicholas Gayle presents the mock-epic 'as a way of misbehaving, of turning things upside down'. Peter W. Graham 'centre[s] mainly on how Byron valued and responded to […] the novel'. Simon Bainbridge examines Byron's cunning satirical attitude in 'Byron and the Lake Poets'. Jeffrey N. Cox scrutinises Byron's relationship with his contemporaries in 'The Satanic School'. Michael Simpson holds that 'The terms 'Byron' and 'Theatre' unite as an essential ingredient of his poetic style. Alan Rawes identifies the Italian writers who help shape Byron's major works and the Byronic Hero. Mary O'Connell then addresses 'Byron and Regency Print Culture'.

Part IV focuses on burgeoning nationalistic romanticisms and literatures throughout Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean. Maria Schoina investigates 'the ways in which the reviewers of mainstream British periodicals influenced the course of Byron's poetic career'. Jonathan Gross seeks to catalogue every biography of Byron written in English. Clara Tuite interrogates how Byron's poetry employed the 'fashion' of Orientalism. Next, Sarah Wooton examines Victorian attitudes to Byron and Byronism.

Piya Pal-Lapinski traces Byron's influence on nineteenth-century classical music and opera. Next, Christine Kenyon-Jones presents Byron as 'by far the most heavily illustrated poet of his day'. Mark Sandy traces Byron's influences on: Yeats, Auden, Woolf, and Faulkner. Carla Pomarè's chapter 'Byron and the Critics in the New Millennium' revisits negative

criticisms of Byron. Joanna Taylor tunes into what is understood as 'Byronic' in the 'social media age'. Paul M. Curtis looks to 'Editing Byron and Digital Futures'.

Part V is entitled 'Reading Byron Now'. In 'Byron and Nationalism', Martin Procházka explores the differences in European nationalism. Jonathon Shears situates ideas that Byron's body occupied parts of his mind and that his mind 'was central to understanding his body'. Hermoine de Almeida demonstrates how Byron scholars can push the boundaries of textual analysis. Will Bowers explores cosmopolitan voices in Byron's notes to his poems. Next, Ghislaine McDayter discusses Byron's sexuality. Tom Mole's chapter 'examine[s] why accounts of Byron's celebrity emerged when they did'. Carl Thompson reads Byron as a 'traveler-poet'.

Jerome McGann contributes a final chapter, also functioning as the collection's afterword. McGann dispels the ultimate rumor levied against Byron through Wordsworth.

This handbook is a joy to read. It would be suitable for postgraduate students and scholars alike. It is clearly a labor of love, and readers can feel the passion and excitement for the subject matter. I will recommend this handbook to colleagues and students for years to come.

Peter Francev
Victor Valley College

Dafydd Moore, ed., *The International Companion to James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*. Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2017. Pp. 187. £14.95. ISBN 9781908980199.

The International Companion to James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian anchors itself in a desire to 'articulate [James] Macpherson's career without resort to a rhetoric of the scoundrel' (10)—a worthy endeavour, when recent scholars sometimes adopt a similar rhetoric to that of eighteenth-century critics concerning Macpherson's nefarious (or not-so-nefarious) ancient Scottish epics. To open, Paul deGategno focuses on Macpherson's correspondence and draws attention to the man beyond the furore that followed *Ossian's* publication. This sets the tone of the whole collection. The introduction and nine chapters revisit and summarise important junctions within *Ossian* scholarship, including landscapes in the poems, *Ossian's* influence on visual aesthetics, and the relationship between Macpherson's anti-colonialism and postcolonial readings of *Ossian*, while also formalising the diverse ways in which Macpherson influenced visual art and literature across Europe.

Although there are no subtitled sections, the essays are loosely grouped as follows: Gaelic tradition and translation practices (chapters one to four), aesthetics and European impact (chapters five to seven), and lastly the Ossianic mode and Macpherson's historical writing (chapters eight and nine). The throughline between them is the importance of Macpherson as a figure whose vision and creativity 'entered the cultural bloodstream of Europe' (8). Much of what is outlined and examined here reveals how Macpherson provided the means and imagery for formulating new perspectives on nationhood. As Robert W. Rix explains, in the late eighteenth century 'cultural prestige was now increasingly to be won through reconstructing one's own ethnic history' (76). Elsewhere, Gauti Kristmannsson points out that, despite Samuel Johnson's vitriolic dismissal of Macpherson's poems, *Ossian* is radical in terms of literary production via translation since its prose threatens 'at least the "poetical order" of British at the time' (48). In her re-examination of the relationship between Scottish Highland oral culture and the Fenian ballads of Ireland, Lesa Ní Mhunghaile suggests that any discussion of the different Gaelic traditions visible in *Ossian* should also acknowledge Macpherson's important role in salvaging the literary heritage of *both* Ireland and Scotland. This point is then examined once more through the postcolonial lens and the idea of nostalgia by Cordula Lemke, who also surveys Macpherson's employment of Gaelic folk ballads for national aims.

There is much to be said here in terms of the influence and impact of *Ossian* when thinking about national identities and pasts, and the *International Companion* sets out the foundations for further probing by scholars. A key feature of this volume is the way it highlights the European perspective within these discussions. After introducing the vast corpus of visual art influenced by Macpherson, Murdo Macdonald reminds us that the transnational impact of *Ossian* 're-emphasises the enduring interest of Macpherson's text as an international phenomenon' (104). This is certainly visible in Scandinavia, where, as Rix explains, *Ossian* influenced Danish national poet Adam Oehlenschläger to embark on his own expedition to rural Denmark (88). Sebastian Mitchell recognises that part of the universality of the poems is due to imagined Highlands, a landscape that can also 'be dramatically relocated with both a personal and collective sense of time and place' (74). As a result, other mountains, terrains, and cultures become mapped onto the Scottish Highlands, thus extending *Ossian's* popularity beyond the British Isles.

The articulation of a homeland and a primitive culture or landscape remains one of the most compelling aspects of *Ossian*. As Dafydd Moore explains, *Ossian* is a product of 'the conviction that the works of primitive cultures the world over are comparable,' and the text 'goes in [*sic*] to be itself key to the growth of idea about the specific and unique value of an individual nation's indigenous culture' (118). Even in Macpherson's historical writing, an

Ossianic sentimentality diffuses through his Augustan approach to politics, statecraft, and war. Robert W. Jones returns to the historical writing (first mentioned in the volume by deGategno) in relation to Macpherson's correspondence. Jones suggests that 'the language of sensibility plays an increasingly active role in Macpherson's dynamically realised characters, whose clashing ambitions are the impetus for history' (130). The result is a historiography that feels Ossianic while marking the tensions and shifting governance across the British Isles; the impact of Macpherson's early success cannot be forgotten in his later writings.

This collection of essays is accessible and valuable, with each short but succinct chapter presenting readers with a thought-provoking examination of Macpherson's legacy and the value of *Ossian*. The volume situates the dominant discussions surrounding Macpherson regarding forgery, authenticity, and translation within the context of his oeuvre as a whole and his own politics. As such, within such a slender volume lies an important introduction and concentrated overview of the creation, aftermath, and legacy of Macpherson's *Ossian*.

Sharon Choe
University of Copenhagen

Eric G. Wilson, *Dream-Child: A Life of Charles Lamb.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022. Pp. 521. £25. ISBN 9780300230802.

A volume of 'Elia' essays in a Hampstead sublet led Eric G. Wilson to quirky essayist Charles Lamb (author also of poetry, drama, and personal letters). Wilson returned to 'Elia' in a workshop on 'literary nonfiction' (xiv) and the rest is history—or at least biography.

Inspired by Lamb's 'freaky prose' (xiv), Wilson plunges us into the world of eighteenth-century London in this account of Lamb's life, with the second person singular 'you' in his 'Introduction: Between Eden and Fleet'. Grants underwrote generous, quality illustrations. The biography (*not* in the second person) summons up similarly vivid scenes of 'The Temple', 'Christ's Hospital' (the 'blue coat school' where Lamb met life-long friend and interlocutor Coleridge), and Lamb's work at his odious day-job at the East India House/Company in the chapter 'East India'. The latter chapter speculates on the moral dilemma of this colonialist enterprise—which was not outwardly troubling to Lamb so much as his enslavement to the tedious work of the grind Monday through Saturday, with very few holidays and one week's leave a year! The public, masculine world of the first chapters yields to the Lambs' family life with the murder of their mother Elizabeth Lamb.

The closeness of the siblings Mary and Charles, their co-produced creative work, and their often-shared dwellings, lead Wilson to explore the sibling relationship. Notably, Chapter 5, 'Day of Horrors', recounts Mary's murder of their mother and wounding of their father John in a fit of insanity. Despite the tragedy, Charles managed to provide compassionate care for his sister, who had intermittent experiences of 'madness', but often thrived in shared domiciles with her brother. Charles himself suffered from depression and alcoholism and was institutionalised once, but had to pull himself together to provide for his remaining family.

The short, concise chapter titles (and chapters themselves, which range from 25 pages long to mostly shorter—sometimes only 3 pages) cover an active life with concision. Some chapters evoke famous friendships (in which Lamb, despite being burdened by his job, held his own) with people like Coleridge, the Wordsworths, Southey, and Leigh Hunt (Ch. 8 'Divine Chit-Chat'; Ch. 9 'Nether Stowey'; Ch. 16 'Godwin'). Other chapters explore Lamb's writing (Ch. 10 '*Blank Verse*'; Ch. 20 'Journalism'; Ch. 28 '*Tales from Shakespear*'; Ch. 29 '*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*'; Ch. 38 'The *London Magazine*', and the related Ch. 39 'Elia'; Ch. 42 'Imperfect Sympathies'; and Ch. 48 the more ephemeral '*Album Verses*'). In this brevity, how much does Wilson cater to the short attention span of today's readers?

Dream-Child, while a serious biography, does not bog one down with scholarly exegesis. Playful prose, however, sometimes distracts—as when Wilson calls William Blake's brother's hosier establishment, the locale of the exhibition of his works Blake held in 1809, a 'sock shop' (409). Just as the reader might be flagging in reading Wilson's account (Lamb's drinking, though a way of coping—and ultimately fatal, in a way, because he died as a result of a quite possibly tipsy fall—becomes irritating), some revelations naturally arise in this chronicle: Lamb's infatuation with and marriage proposal to the young actress Frances Kelly, and his close relationship to his and Mary's ward, Emma Isola. Psychoanalytic speculation is evident, for instance, with the Emma/Moxon marriage episode. In Chapter 41, 'Emma', Wilson speculates that Charles may have been erotically fixated on Emma Isola but declares 'Lamb's own words argue against any romantic longings on his part' (387). Perhaps coyly, he concludes the speculative chapter (which muses about Charles' apparent distress over Emma's engagement, and Mary's own mental breakdown immediately relieved by the announcement of Emma's marriage to Moxon): 'The nature of Charles's relationship to Emma must remain a mystery' (387).

Dream-Child begins with a Preface outlining perhaps the worst insult Lamb ever suffered, one which he could do nothing about because he was dead: being dismissed by mid-

twentieth century critics—made worse by the fact that it was the 100th anniversary of Lamb's death in 1934. It began with Denys Thompson, colleague of F. R. Leavis. Despite this culmination of literary politics, Wilson leaves out today's culture wars. New Historicism still seems to dominate: such Lamb essays as 'The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers' and 'The South-Sea House' are found in British Literature anthologies like the Norton and Broadview, along with Lamb's letters, addressed to fellow writers and intellectuals of the day. To his credit, though Lamb's poetry gets little attention these days, Wilson examines it. It's disappointing that the book ends with Lamb's death and not his literary and critical resurrection, but perhaps that would be premature.

Wilson's contemporaneous style itself questions whether Charles Lamb—with the 250th anniversary of his birth this year—will find readers in our time, despite his biographer's arguments to the contrary. Such biographies as *Dream-Child* may be the only things that can renew contemporary interest in the literary work of the Lambs by sparking interest in their lives.

Josephine A. McQuail
Independent Scholar

Julia Banister, *Masculinity, Militarism and Eighteenth-Century Culture, 1689-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 258. £32. ISBN 9781107195196.

Julia Banister's book provides a compelling investigation into the relationship between militarism and masculinity. Utilising a range of sources, her research offers a comparative approach to the subject, considering the relationship between cultural discourse and the practice of military masculinity, predominantly through the context of the court-martial.

The book does not attempt to be comprehensive in its account, nor does it seek to situate the military man in relation to a civilian 'other' (3). Instead, Banister offers a focused analysis of competing military masculinities which struggled for cultural and social hegemony over the course of the long eighteenth century. In particular, she focuses on two 'parallel lines of argument' (13), the first of which conceived of militarism as essential to masculinity, 'lodged within and made manifest by a "naturally" sexed body' (3). The second understood military masculinity as something which had to be cultivated, performed, and sustained. Here Banister draws on the work of Judith Butler and Thomas Laqueur to suggest that the counterargument to essentialism stressed the performance of masculine gender identity in a manner which could be understood as proto-constructionist (6-9). As Banister illustrates, these two lines of argument were not static but profoundly affected by the growing cultural currency of politeness, sensibility, and celebrity, as well as the growth of the public sphere and the structural changes to the army and navy. In taking this approach, the book avoids an overly linear narrative and instead examines the complexity of conceptualising the military man both in print *and* in practice.

Beginning in post-revolutionary England during the reign of William III, Banister analyses the standing army debate as a framing device for understanding the essentialist and proto-constructionist perspectives. Opponents of a standing army, such as John Trenchard and John Toland, argued that it was a tool of absolutism. Utilising the language of civic humanism, they suggested that the militiaman, naturally endowed with courage and military prowess, would ensure the security of the nation. Conversely, proponents of a standing army suggested that 'male bodies are not imbued with latent military capacity' (23) and must be shaped through training to fight effectively. An uncomfortable aspect of this argument, however, was its emphasis on performance. The modern military man lacked an innate civic militarism yet was seemingly too rough and ready to be 'properly polite' (33). The progression of this debate within Banister's book is not reduced to new writers putting forward new ideas, but a mix of social, cultural, and political conditions that fostered a revaluation of how men were either naturally militaristic, or necessarily deficient and therefore in need of training facilitated by the professionalisation of the military man.

As noted, case studies of court-martials are interspersed throughout this book, serving to anchor these abstract debates by examining the actions and practices of individual military men. Due to the nature of the source material, these formulations of military masculinity were, quite literally, put on trial, making them ideal for understanding how the practice of masculinity measured up to legal, as well as public, scrutiny. For example, during the trials of Admiral Lestock (1745) and Admiral Byng (1756-7) both men defended their actions by emphasising the importance of discipline and correct procedure by deferring to the navy's *Articles of War*. The outcome of these respective court-martials resulted in a verdict of innocence for the former and guilt for the latter. Banister demonstrates that the modern military man, who was disciplined and adherent to a strict code of conduct, did not exponentially gain traction throughout the eighteenth century but faced public pushback and, in the case of Byng, condemnation from military authorities.

Banister's decision to eschew 'a single narrative of "change"' (10) is not at the expense of tracking actual change over time. She concludes that the centralisation of military authority 'conquered the old ideal of the militiaman, but only by cannibalising the civic assumption that all men are capable of militarism and turning this into an assertion that all men can be made to be military men' (225).

Overall, Banister's book is a coherent, thorough, and interesting piece of research which effectively examines the complex relationship between militarism and masculinity. As a result, any criticism of the book is marginal. One aspect worth highlighting is the case studies' exclusive focus on naval officers. However, Banister convincingly argues in favour of her source selection by stating the importance of Britain's fleet to national defence and the role of the navy in military innovation, citing Jeremy Black. Furthermore, the chronological structure of the book runs the risk of repeating or reiterating arguments already made in previous chapters; however, Banister adeptly avoids this pitfall, throwing into sharp relief the change *and* continuity of this period. To conclude, specialists and students alike will undoubtedly find value in this excellent publication.

Edward Hardiman
Keele University

Michael Kramp, ed., *Jane Austen and Masculinity: Transits, Literature, Thought and Culture, 1650-1850* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2024). Pp. 301. $39.95. ISBN 9781611488661.

This impressive and timely collection of essays explores the diverse masculine identities across Austen's works. Michael Kramp's useful and clearly argued introduction rehearses the case for problematising the masculine gender and for seeing its representations as accurately and as critically as feminist theorists have seen representations of women (3). Kramp agrees with other theorists that masculinity is continually seen as in crisis. He cites Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, in their *The Masculinities Reader* (2001), to point out that this perception of crisis tends to produce a moral panic around men and masculinity, which can quickly turn into a backlash against women and feminism, and, as we all know all too well, into open hostility to or even oppression of the LGBTQ+ community.

The essays cover an impressively diverse range of topics. In 'Men, Domesticity and the Family', Jan Fergus offers a detailed study of the gender politics of domestic space. Fergus incisively explores the different models of masculinity in *Emma,* focusing on John Knightley, as an embodiment of 'whining masculinity', and comparing his attitude to domestic ties to that of Mr Weston, in light of his decision to have the Churchills adopt his son, Frank. Perhaps most illuminating is the consideration of the implications of Austen's praise for the style of Charles William [Pasley]'s *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (1811). Next, Kit Kincade ably examines 'Failures of the Patriarchy: Fathers as Role models in Jane Austen', exploring the roles or shortcomings of fathers, the roles of the three dead fathers in *Sense and Sensibility,* and the inadequate parenting of the Crawfords in *Mansfield Park*, concluding that 'Austen seems almost biblical in asserting that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children'(58). Natasha Duquette offers a thoughtful and perceptive analysis of 'The Sensibility of Captain Benwick', concluding that he represents 'a model of masculinity as much needed in our own time, as in [Austen's]' (109). I certainly agree that Benwick's mild and melancholy thoughtfulness might be a welcome corrective to the forms of hyper or toxic masculinity currently so much in the ascendant, and might have seemed welcome to Austen's first readers—at least in contrast to the models of louche military masculinity, or entitled and self-destructive carelessness which seem to mark Austen's more obviously disagreeable male characters. Nevertheless, I do not find the claim for Benwick's exemplary status in Austen's time entirely persuasive, not only because Admiral Croft finds Benwick too soft and too *piano* for his approval, but also because his bereaved melancholy is persistently represented as a form of illness or at least debility. Duquette's essay is immediately followed by Enit K. Steiner's firmly argued discussion of 'Literary Men and Melancholia', which follows the critique repeatedly given of Men of Feeling in the eighteenth century, in dismissing Benwick's 'narcissistic enjoyment of suffering' (120).

The final section focuses on Austen on YouTube and in television and cinema adaptations, discussing the military dandies who so frequently shape the plots of the novels, as well as the cross-dressing frivolity of Mr Denny in *Pride and Prejudice*. Megan A. Woodworth, in 'I could meet him in no other way: Duelling, the Culture of Honor, and Modern Masculinity in *Sense and Sensibility*', offers an acute analysis of the contrasting models of masculinity in relation to attitudes to birth or hereditary property as important determinants of masculine character and behaviour, showing the 'pitfalls of hereditary patriarchal power, not only for female agency but for the men themselves' (91), read against Richardson's *Clarissa.* Finally, Gayle Magee's chapter 'Performing to Strangers: Masculinity, Adaptation and Music in *Pride and Prejudice* (1995)' reads the familiar BBC adaptation afresh by viewing it perceptively through the lens of Carl Davis's musical score.

Overall, this is a thoroughly thought-provoking and worthwhile collection of essays, which I recommend to any student seeking to refresh their reading of these familiar texts. In recent decades, the BBC has made the most of its extensive wardrobe of vaguely Austen-style frocks and tight breeches—the traditional garb of Austen adaptations—in order to show us versions of Austen which comfort in the most unchallenging ways, presenting versions of a British past populated almost exclusively by the clean, tidy, white and polite middle classes, untroubled by industrialisation or, indeed, much sign of labour of any kind. Perhaps these critics could next consider the satirical shows bringing Austen to a wider audience or readership with little time for what is clean, tidy, or genteel, such as *Plied and Prejudice* (The Vaults, London) or the improv show *Austentatious* (currently on tour).

Harriet Guest
University of York

Matthew Reynolds, ed., *Prismatic Jane Eyre: Close-Reading a World Novel Across Languages*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2023. Pp. 885. £53.95. ISBN 9781800648425.

Prismatic Jane Eyre: Close-Reading a World Novel Across Languages is certainly a colossal work, not only for its enormous size (the hardcopy is a 900-page volume), but above all for its scope and relevance to the study of the translations of *Jane Eyre* and, more generally, the reception of Charlotte Brontë's novel across languages and cultures from its publication in 1847 to the present day. The book is the result of the Prismatic Jane Eyre research project (2016-2023), led by Matthew Reynolds, who is also the main author and coordinator of this book aiming at 'redefining' *Jane Eyre* 'as a multilingual, transtemporal and nomadic work' (27) by dealing with a vast corpus of 618 translations in 68 languages, compiled by the participants in the project.

Plurality is one of the defining traits of *Prismatic Jane Eyre*. Plural are the voices that we find in it, as the book is co-authored by more than 20 scholars who approach the study of the novel and its multiple translations from different perspectives, considering different languages, contexts, and responses to Brontë's text. Various also are the contents of the book, which is marketed in both hardback and paperback and is freely accessible online too. It is structured in 8 chapters and 17 essays. The chapters, written by Reynolds, act as a guide and introduction to the essays, which each offer either case studies of the afterlives of *Jane Eyre* in specific languages and regions or close readings of the novel and its translations. Essays explore various aspects of the translations of *Jane Eyre* into Arabic (Yousif M. Qasmiyeh), French (Céline Sabiron, Léa Rychen), Spanish (Andrés Claro), Chinese (Yunte Huang), German (Mary Frank), Slovenian (Jernej Habjan), Estonian (Madli Kütt), and Russian (Eugenia Kelbert). The book also includes essays on the reception of *Jane Eyre* in India (Ulrich Timme Kragh and Abhishek Jain), Greece (Eleni Philippou), and Iran (Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould), as well as essays examining inaccuracies and silences, such as source-text variations in translation (Paola Gaudio) and the absence of translations into Swahili (Annmarie Drury). Furthermore, special attention is paid to the expression of passion and emotions across languages, a theme discussed one of Reynolds's chapters and in several essays on the language of emotions in the translations of the novel into Portuguese (Ana Teresa Marques dos Santos and Cláudia Pazos-Alonso), Danish (Ida Klitgård), and Italian (Paola Gaudio).

Essays and chapters are the core of the book, but *Prismatic Jane Eyre* is not just a collection of essays by several contributors—in fact, throughout the volume, emphasis is placed on the fact that they are not contributors but co-authors. The book is conceived as a collaborative and transmedial project, in which the contents of the printed book—which also includes a list of translations of *Jane Eyre*, arranged by language, and short biographies of some translators—are complemented by digital media. These consist of interactive digital maps created by Giovanni Pietro Vitali and trans-lingual textual animations with translations of selected quotations, which are all available online and can be accessed through hyperlinks and QR codes. This creates a sort of multimodal polyphony that effectively integrates digital techniques into rigorous research in the fields of literary history and translation.

In addition, the book benefits from methodological pluralism. It adopts a prismatic approach to the study of translation, also expounded by Reynolds (*Prismatic Translation*, 2019), which understands translation not as a channel through which a text produces an equivalent text in another language, but as a prism through which the text opens up endless possibilities and versions, which also have the potential to generate other re-creations and responses. Translation thus creates difference, and the book centres on the diverse and multiple 'Jane Eyres' that have emerged across languages, time, and space. Moreover, the analysis

combines distant reading, as reflected in the compilation of the corpus of translations and the maps representing them, with collaborative and multi-lingual close reading, creating a model for literary analysis that can be applied to other texts that have circulated globally.

Prismatic Jane Eyre marks a milestone in the study of Charlotte Brontë's afterlives, being of special interest not only to Brontë and Victorian scholars, but also to those either working in comparative literature and literary translation or willing to introduce a transnational perspective to the study of literature. As such, the book can serve as a model and inspiration for scholars in the field of Romantic literature and culture, especially as transnational approaches to the study of Romanticism have received decided impetus in recent times.

Sara Medina Calzada
Universidad de Valladolid

Will Sherwood and Julian Eilmann, eds, *The Romantic Spirit in the Works of JRR Tolkien*. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2024. Pp. 422. £23.25. ISBN 9783905703511.

The Romantic Spirit in the Works of JRR Tolkien does not disappoint its readers in the seamless and intriguing blending of ideas from the worlds of Romanticism and Tolkien. Divided into four sections—'Nationalism, History, and the Other'; 'Language, Art, and Music'; 'Imagination, Desire, and Sensation'; 'Nature and Travel'—the 14 essays will appeal to those curious to see connections between Romantic literature and Tolkien.

'Nationalism, History, and the Other' begins with '"Anglo-Saxons on Horseback'" or "Mail-Shirted Sioux or Cheyenne"'? by Valentina P. Aparicio and Elliott Greene. By first examining the stadial history of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic literature, Aparicio and Greene draw comparisons between Romantic and Rohirrim descriptions of 'Indians', followed by descriptions of *The Last of the Mohicans* and the most significant 'Indian War' battle: the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In 'Tolkien, Medieval Romances and the Romantic Spirit', Lynn Forest-Hill acknowledges Tolkien's indebtedness to Sir Walter Scott's Romantic Medieval Romances but argues that *The Lord of the Rings* forms the Tolkienian *legendarium*, seeking a connection to Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle. Sharin Schroeder bridges the novels of Walter Scott and Tolkien through literary traditions, examining how Scottish Romanticism lends itself to the conception of Middle Earth. Mariana Rios Maldonado's 'A Dark Romantic Gaze: Otherness and Evil in Hoffmann and Tolkien' uses otherness to connect Hoffmann to Tolkien, illustrating how German gothic elements play into Tolkien's other worlds, centering on the otherness of Middle Earth.

'Language, Art, and Music' begins with Verlyn Flieger's 'Words, Words, Words: Tolkien, Barfield and Romanticism'. Flieger demonstrates how language can create a mythology that offers the reader a practical approach to analysing the imagination. Invoking Owen Barfield, Flieger relies on and expands her support of Tolkien to fellow World War I poets. 'Horns, Bullets, and Rings: Tolkien's "extreme fondness" for Carl Maria von Weber' seeks to 'make comparisons between some subjects, episodes characters and characterisations of Weber's operas and those found in Tolkien's works'. Here, Chiara Bertoglio illustrates the connection between music and literature, suggesting that Weber influenced *The Lord of the Rings*. Annise Rogers expounds upon how William Blake and Tolkien each created visual arts to accompany their literary endeavors. Here, Tolkien is in good company with fellow writer-poet-artists like those of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Art Nouveau movement. David Smith's '"living shapes that move from mind to mind": Tolkien's Visual Romanticism' is a wonderful companion piece to Rogers'. Smith examines multifaceted elements where 'conscious allusions to visual theories proposed by Goethe and Romanticists' enable readers to literally visualise a form of transcendence.

'Imagination, Desire, and Sensation' begins with 'Tolkien's Romantic Gusto', co-authored by Kacie L. Wills and Christopher Hagan. The essay connects Keats with Tolkien through Keats' notion of 'gusto'. Next, in 'Tolkien and Coleridge: Act and Desire in *The Silmarillion*', Adam Neikirk connects Plato, transcendence, and Coleridge to Tolkien through the ontology of language, as indicated by power, desire, and energy. John R. Holmes writes about Romantic imagination and fancy in 'Romantic Imagination, Fancy, and *kalymma* in Tolkien's "On Fairy-stories"'. This essay examines: '(1) the philological relations of the words *imagination*, *fancy*, and *fantasy*; (2) the relation of poetic creation to God's (Tolkien's sub-creation); and (3) poetry's power of 'removing the veil' from reality'. "The Backs of Trees': Tolkien, the British Theological Romantics, & the Fantastic Imagination' by Austin M. Freeman seeks to elucidate the 'engagement with God, society, and nature' through 'sacramental ontology, anti-industrialism, medievalism, optimism and an emphasis on the

fantastic imagination'. Finally, in '"His songs are stronger songs": Aesthetic Creation, Enchantment, and the Wordsworthian Sublime in Tolkien', Brandon Wernette argues that 'On Fairy-stories' encapsulates Tolkien's aesthetic theory by examining moments within *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, which ultimately 'manifests as a kind of magic'.

'Nature and Travel' comprises Eva Lippold's 'Walking into Mordor: Tolkien and Romantic Travel Writing' and Nick Groom's '"The Ghostly Language of the Ancient Earth": Tolkien, Geology, and Romantic Lithology'. Lippold compares and contrasts 'Tolkien's idea of journeying in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and the portrayal of travel in Romantic writing', identifying a kind of Tolkienian 'grand tour' of Middle Earth. Groom evokes a connection between Tolkien, his Romantic poetic precursors, and instances framed in Anglo-Saxon literature.

Specialists and nonspecialists alike will enjoy the arguments presented in over 400 pages of scholarship. Nonspecialist readers will gain a deeper understanding of Tolkien's best-known and lesser-known works; whilst specialists will appreciate the scholars' ability to bridge Tolkien's works with those of the Romantic period writers, providing a better understanding of the period and Tolkien's connections. I highly recommend this collection for the casual and serious reader of Tolkien.

Peter Francev
Victor Valley College