

Anne Janowitz, *Women Romantic Poets: Anna Barbauld and Mary Robinson*.
Tavistock: British Council and Northcote House, 2004. Pp. 124. £10.99. ISBN
0746308965.

This broadly chronological study offers a mapping and paralleling of Barbauld and Robinson's poetic terrains from the 1760s through to the early 1800s. A real strength of the book lies in the richness of contextualising socio-biographical detail drawn from memoirs, letters, and contemporary accounts of these women. Through this, Janowitz succeeds in bringing the women to life in our imagination, and the rich garnering of anecdote and detail is both interesting to the general reader and helpful in shaping critical responses to the two women's work. The 'geography of radical London' (60) is a central focus of the study and Janowitz's informed and detailed construction of this actual and ideological space provides the central backdrop to Barbauld and Robinson's parallel negotiations with radical literary networks.

The thrust of Janowitz's overall argument is that while Robinson moves intellectually, politically, and creatively towards a Romantic poetics, Barbauld remains lodged within the poetics associated with an earlier generation of writers: while 'Mary Robinson threw herself into the new poetry of simplicity with hardly a backward glance at her days as an ornamented Della Cruscan – her cultural radicalism hurrying her into the future – Anna Barbauld struggled to find forms and forums for conveying her Enlightenment values and devotional sensibility' (86).

In order to reach this point Janowitz presents us with a careful analysis of Robinson's many personal and public transformations, and in the early stages of her discussion supports the critical argument that this 'chameleonic' (54) tendency was a deliberate strategy of survival. The detailed exploration of Robinson's mimicry of poetic voices and identities tended to work against Janowitz's later claim for authenticity in Robinson's final adoption of Romantic

styles, however (82), and given Robinson's repeated and transient imitations of the current fashions in both poetry and gender identity, it was difficult to be wholly convinced by this claim for her authenticity as a fully-fledged Romantic poet. Both poetically and in life she seems to have been the consummate actress.

Set against Janowitz's claim for Robinson's authentic Romantic voice is her comparative construction of Barbauld as a poet who was finally unable to negotiate a full transition into the poetics of Romanticism. Along the way there is a robust engagement with Barbauld's neglected educational writing in chapter 3, which points to her formative influence in developing our understanding of the emotional territory of childhood, and there are moments when Janowitz gestures towards a more complex formulation of Barbauld's contribution to the poetics of the period. She observes, for example, that the mid-eighteenth century 'habit' of working within traditional poetic conventions was 'altered by individuals such as the young Anna Aikin by their striking formulations and irrepressible personal voice, a habit that ultimately broke through the internal logic of sensibility itself' (30). Janowitz's overall argument, however, worked rather disappointingly towards the reinforcement of traditional readings of Barbauld's poetics as restricted by her rational dissenting ideology, claiming ultimately that, Barbauld 'was not able to redraw the boundaries of the poetic she had inherited' (70).

Janowitz's positioning of Barbauld as a poet was perhaps skewed by her endorsement of traditional assumptions that Barbauld was opposed to feminist intellectual movements of the day. Janowitz cites as 'disheartening' (18), for example, the extract from a letter by Barbauld which is included in Lucy Aikin's 1825 *Memoir* of the poet, and which implies that Barbauld had rejected Elizabeth Montagu's scheme of establishing an educational establishment for women. Recent published material has, however, brought forward new archival evidence to suggest that this letter was in fact written not to Montagu, as Aikin implies, but to Barbauld's prospective husband, and these new findings put a very different slant on this document and its implications. Much of the recent critical work on

Barbauld has suggested that her position in relation to gender politics of the period is more subtle and complex than had previously been assumed, and Janowitz's construction of Barbauld as a poet might have been further enriched by an engagement with some of these revisionary critical readings.

The final chapter of the book sets out to formulate some conclusions about the two women's relationship to Romanticism by focusing on their responses to the young Samuel Coleridge, and again this helped to establish a sense of the complex poetic networks operating within the period. Janowitz's interpretation of the literary dialogues between these three poets works to confirm her central thesis and so she suggests that Robinson's engagement with Coleridge was a product of her fully assimilated Romantic position while Barbauld was viewed by the young Romantics as 'a remnant of another age' (97). Coleridge's at times quite vitriolic and hostile construction of Barbauld has contributed to her later exclusion from the canons of Romanticism and yet ironically Janowitz seems to adopt and reinforce his critical positioning with her assertion that Barbauld's comments to Coleridge suggest that she was indeed a 'literary judge from an older generation' (100) and through her claim that Coleridge's literary anecdote regarding Barbauld's alleged comment on 'The Ancient Mariner,' 'exemplifies this generation gap' (100).

The *Writers and their Work* series has been ground-breaking in its commitment to the publication of accessible studies of neglected writers, including women writers from a range of historical periods. Yet this new contribution to the series seems to inhabit a slightly ambivalent critical position. The editorial decision to offer a study of two women poets might perhaps suggest an ongoing reluctance to shift from the general survey model into individual author studies of specific women writers, which given their increasing status in Romantic era anthologies and on undergraduate literary courses, would seem surprising. In this case the pairing of Mary Robinson with Anna Barbauld made for an uneasy marriage, despite attempts to find points of contact in external

networks, and Janowitz is pushed towards a critical framework of 'antithetical complementarity' between two women from the outset with 'Mrs Barbauld and Mrs Robinson as *Sense and Sensibility*' (1) – a framework which leads at times to the reinforcement of traditional reductive constructions of these women writers, particularly in the case of Barbauld.

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Patricia Comitini, *Vocational Philanthropy and British Women's Writing, 1790-1810: Wollstonecraft, Moore, Edgeworth, Wordsworth*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. Pp. 176. £40. ISBN 0754650421.

In *Vocational Philanthropy and British Women's Writing*, Patricia Comitini endeavours to single out the female sex as particularly inclined towards a specific form of writing which promotes benevolence and a greater understanding between classes. In her view, this is expressed in the literary production of several women writers around the turn of the eighteenth century, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah Moore, Maria Edgeworth and Dorothy Wordsworth. As Comitini suggests in her somewhat idealistic reading of their works: '[T]he power lies in the combination of middling-class women writers across a political, religious and intellectual spectrum that produces a feminine community who are interested and invested in constructing literature that will be of benefit to mankind. It is with this impetus that these women contribute to the stability of English culture and society' (154).

Comitini starts by tracing the connotative and linguistic fluctuation of the concepts of charity, philanthropy and feminine benevolence in the examined period, as well as providing a brief historical and contextual background. In the eighteenth century philanthropy was thought to be the solution to the social ills and the wide-spread poverty of England. In answer to the great need of raising

the level of literacy among the under-privileged classes, one of the most important branches of philanthropy was education. Comitini suggests that the literacy transformation made it easier for women writers to convey their textual attempts to reform English society. What she labels 'vocational philanthropy' becomes an important means of empowering the poor and labouring masses by 'the internalization of particular ideologies defined and disseminated through texts' (31).

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is referred to as an early model of vocational philanthropy writing, thus leaving 'a gap to be filled by other women writing, reading, and improving themselves and society' (43). In her first analytical chapter, Comitini takes considerable pains to describe the 'truly feminine' (43) space that Wollstonecraft creates. However, this is unfortunately something of a weak spot in Comitini's argumentation, and with little substantial evidence she merely ends up by abruptly stating: 'Wollstonecraft's feminist rhetoric is coextensive with the goals of philanthropy, and is part of the material practice of reading and writing that will enable those utopian dreams to become reality in the future' (50). Since Comitini's main concept is quite abstract and evasive, it would have helped to have more elucidating examples from Wollstonecraft's text of what vocational philanthropy more precisely consists of and how the latter creates this space for her female colleague writers.

In the rather lengthy third chapter Comitini moves on to discuss two of the most important proponents of philanthropic literature, Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth, both of whom attempted to inculcate the habit of reading to the lower orders. Their popular and influential moral tales were well suited for philanthropic purposes. Through a close reading of a few key narratives in More's and Edgeworth's tracts, Comitini aptly demonstrates their educational value. Furthermore, she manages to take the edge off of Anne Mellor's idealistic over-enthusiasm about Hannah More's revolutionary impetus, expressed in her

ambitious study *Mothers of the Nation*. Rather, as Comitini convincingly shows, it is conservative values like the domestic, the private and the ethical that are the basic notions for creating narratives that the upper, middle and lower classes can equally appreciate.

Comitini argues that Edgeworth 'envisions a space in which women exist at the center of a domestic sphere that is central to civil society' (109). She continues her focus on this writer by discussing her novel *Belinda*, claiming that Edgeworth 'reshapes the novel's ideological function—to reform readers, particularly women' (111). It is Edgeworth's great achievement, Comitini concludes, that she 'reconciles the novel's form and individual reform: the moral tale and the novel were no longer in contradiction' (127).

The inclusion of the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth in a study of textual philanthropy may appear a bit far-fetched, but it is Comitini's argument in the last chapter that the *Grasmere Journals* presents the result of the particular female philanthropic ideal (131). Although giving some examples of 'feminine writing as social practice', the chapter still leaves me a bit sceptical and the claim that '[t]he *Grasmere Journal* is a site of philanthropic intervention' (132) seems somewhat forced with its frequent reiteration throughout this short chapter.

In spite of a few flaws, for one thing a heavy reliance on other critical sources for the background information, Comitini's book provides valuable insight into this, apparently, little investigated but important niche of women's writing. It is most successful in clearly illustrating the urgent need to improve literacy among the lower classes in this period, something which is undertaken by all the female authors under consideration. One of its weak points, in my view, is, almost inevitably, the abstractedness and elusiveness of the basic concept. Or perhaps this was only an undesired side-effect of my own inbuilt resistance to abstraction. Anyway, if we should still be in doubt when reaching the end, Comitini has inserted the most clear-cut definition of her key concept in the very

brief conclusion: ‘Vocational philanthropy is a historically-specific social practice which helped produce a model of middling-class feminine benevolence and, in turn, helped to produce a set of discourses designed to privatize the public problem of poverty and harmonize social relations among all classes’ (153). For the benefit of the reader, perhaps this distinct clarification should be placed in the introduction rather than in the conclusion.

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Peter Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 275. £45. ISBN 0521843464.

Peter Knox-Shaw argues against readings of Austen that see her as either a rabid anti-Jacobin or a radical feminist. In particular, he contests durable notions of the ‘reactionary Austen’, whose conservative world view is rooted in an (Evangelical) Christianity that is ultimately anti-history. Instead, he privileges a flexible, porous Austen, minutely receptive to contemporary ideas, notably the sceptical Anglo-Scottish tradition of Enlightenment philosophy and scientific debate. In its concern with the particularities of context, Knox-Shaw’s study invites comparison with William Galperin’s magisterial *The Historical Austen*, published in the preceding year. Where Galperin locates an oppositional Austen, whose works are alert to the possible, even the improbable, and wary of the hegemonic implications of probability, Knox-Shaw’s Austen espouses ‘centrist views’ (5), and, for all the new detail that he adds, this Austen looks familiar. If readers love or hate the Galperin book—either delighted or dismayed by the flamboyance of its style and substance—*Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* is unlikely to arouse such passions. But there is much to admire, along with some minor irritations.

The study opens with a long (70 pages) introductory chapter, entitled 'Auspices', which shows how the Steventon Rectory was immersed in contemporary science and philosophy, from David Hume and Adam Smith through the work of more obscure scientists whose work was discussed in James Austen's periodical *The Loiterer*. The chapter has useful glosses on Austen's critique of sensibility in the juvenilia, and an account of the family's investment in Enlightenment theatricality, which will later influence Austen's attention to the world stage. In some ways, this is the least satisfying chapter, being saturated with biographical and psychological speculation (George Austen's scientific instruments were 'no doubt frequently put to use by the children'; 'We can be sure that Jane felt herself to be', and so on).

Thereafter, the book turns to the formula of one novel per chapter. Knox-Shaw analyses the novels in the sequence that they were first prepared for publication rather than the order in which they finally appeared or the first versions written. This is a wonderful strategy that reorders our conventional sense of the early novels, so that we move from *Pride and Prejudice* to *Northanger Abbey* to *Sense and Sensibility*. Each chapter yields judicious insights in its historically-inflected close readings. Thus, *Pride and Prejudice* offers a playful critique of the picturesque, but more fundamentally an embrace of its libertarian ideas; the plot itself is revealed as tied to this aesthetic, full of 'unexpected disclosures and ironic reversals', just like the favoured landscapes of Knight, Price and Gilpin. Reading Mr Collins through the lens of Robert Bage's caricatured parson Dr Blick emphasizes Austen's congruence with the Jacobin novelists against whom she is 'so often assumed to have warred' (100). *Northanger Abbey* turns out, unsurprisingly, to be haunted by the Gothic, but also by sceptical and tolerant versions of history. The chapter on *Sense and Sensibility* finds its presiding deity in Adam Smith, whose *Theory of Moral Sentiments* validates the emotional bonding of the novel's key characters. What Knox-Shaw calls Austen's 'bifocalism' or 'bilingualism' means that she contains

'contrapuntal' voices in her work and acknowledges the validity of a range of perspectives.

A chapter called 'Diffraction', on the relations between the Enlightenment and Evangelicalism, separates the consideration of the early and late novels, and shifts the emphasis from 'The Eighteenth-Century Legacy' to 'Engaging with the New Age'. *Mansfield Park* is seen as a Malthusian novel, full of insights from the emergent field of city studies. In a nuanced reading that gets to grips with why Fanny is not a 'paragon of virtue', Knox-Shaw charts the formative role of socioeconomic "circumstance" so that Fanny's famous reserve is the product of nurture more than nature. The chapter on *Emma* demonstrates Austen's reliance on a framework of empiricist psychology. *Persuasion* emerges as 'a rethinking of the Regency romance' (224), while *Sanditon* has affinities with the enlightened Romanticism of Constable.

This is a study that will help students do things with Austen—throughout Knox-Shaw displays a fine sensitivity to Austen's texts, and to the texture of her prose. He is less sensitive to the complexities of literary history, adducing a tendency among critics to polarize the period into Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin camps, though for many years literary historians have recognized the complexities of conservatism and radicalism. Marilyn Butler and her *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* are used throughout as metonyms for 'the Anti-Jacobin school', and the book is a sustained campaign against her reading of Austen. Without this palpable antagonism, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* would have been a better book. In classic fashion, however, the repressed returns, and Knox-Shaw's account is everywhere indebted to Butler's seminal analysis; even the final paragraph depends on a refutation that quotes her words.

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Joel Pace and Matthew Scott, eds., *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. 248. £45. ISBN 1403901333.

This volume makes a large claim, which is amply warranted by its eleven essays: namely, that a full appreciation of Wordsworth's influence on America is more to be seen in its literary or aesthetic *culture* than in narrowly text-centered influences studies, and that, as a result, the collection 'is a more thorough examination of nineteenth-century America's Wordsworth than has ever been undertaken.' (6)

There are some caveats on this claim as well. One is that the Wordsworth whose influence it traces is a quite conservative figure, very much the Sage of Rydal Mount – as befits a volume inspired by the work of Stephen Gill on Wordsworth and the Victorians. Another is that the poet's biography carries as much weight, if not more, as his poems, in the influences here measured. Finally, it appears that the influence of the 'Wordsworth' it traces is, for the most part, more apparent in secondary figures than in the major American Romantics.

But, taken all together, these are excellent essays. Richard Grivil is fully persuasive on 'The Wordsworthian Metamorphosis of Natty Bumppo,' because of his urbane, confident tone, which teases out analogies without worrying over precise echoes of vocabulary. In this confident manner, he is joined by Richard Brantley, in 'The Wordsworthian Cast of Dickinson's Romantic Heritage,' though thoroughly secularized readers should be prepared for a professional nuancing of theological definitions that may be lost on them. Bruce Graver adduces Wordsworth's influence on 'Whittier and the Problem of the American Picturesque' in some excellent historicizing criticism that may not raise our appreciation of Whittier's craft much, but does remind us of how this courageous anti-slavery writer could subtly extend his sympathies for the vanished 'red man.'

I judge the two best all-around essays to be those by Adam Potkay and Lance Newman. Potkay's is all the more impressive for making us pay our attention to persons and subjects who might not initially grab it: Episcopalian Bishop George Washington Doane of New Jersey and his proselytizing friend, Henry Reed, Wordsworth's great American editor. Setting these High Church social conservatives up against the far better cultural press enjoyed in posterity by the individualistic Transcendentalists of Boston allows Potkay to bring into relief a wider Wordsworthian influence in America, whose bi-polar nature will be immediately recognizable to Romantic scholars: broadly speaking, the social conservative of *The Excursion* and the radical individualist of *The Prelude*.

Newman does an excellent job along a similarly difficult avenue of approach: seeing Wordsworth not in Thoreau's great prose works but in his youthful, often derivative poetry. He shows how Thoreau both adopted and resisted his Romantic precursor, and how that influence continued in another vein: 'He [Thoreau] never gave up writing intensively composed material; he just stopped writing verse.' (138)

Near the end of the book's batting order, James Butler hits a clean-up home run with his enjoyably convincing analysis of Wordsworth's impact on Owen Wister's creation of the eponymous hero of *The Virginian*. Karen Karbiener's essay on Wordsworth and Whitman is one of the shortest in the volume, and with good reason: Whitman covered his tracks back to Wordsworth more assiduously than those of any other influence on him. It may well be that the Wordsworthian influence on Whitman is America's greatest literary debt to England, but it is probably also the hardest to prove, as secrecy and self-promotion were twin second natures to the good gay poet.

I found more problems with Joel Pace's essay on the 'transatlantic' gothic cast of American racist writing before and after the Civil War, and with Elizabeth Fay's study of Wordsworth's chivalric influence on Edwin Austin Abbey's Holy

Grail murals in the Boston Public Library. Not because the essays are not well written and well argued (the volume's scholarship in general is formidable), but because, in Pace's case, more topics are started up than can be successfully chased down in twenty pages. The wedding of gothicism to racism is truly a marriage made in hell, and we may thank Pace for sparing us many of the ghastly progeny it produced in America. Instead, he focuses on how Wordsworth's model helped both southern and northern writers refine their sense and representation of 'inner nature', particularly in their representation of mental states through symbolic structures (cf. 'The Ruined Cottage' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher'). Fay is fascinating in her knowledge and deployment of 19th century medievalism on both sides of the Atlantic. The only problem for me was her choice of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* as the Wordsworthian the source of its Romantic influence.

The volume is framed by two magisterial essays. Susan Manning's opening methodological reflection ranges widely on the direction such studies as the present one might take in the future. For example, are Anglo-American studies a version of Comparative Literature? Her opening comparison of Wordsworth and Margaret Fuller is worth an essay in itself, and how this connects with her somewhat surprising foregrounding of *style* as her key concept, and how this leads, in turn, to considerations of linguistics and national identity, and thence to etymology and metaphor as kinds of proto- (or protean) theorizing, is all quite wonderful, even if one has to hang on tight sometimes to stay with the ride.

The same is true for Matthew Scott's closing essay, on the proliferating representations of pain and suffering in contemporary photojournalism. That Wordsworth was felt in the nineteenth century to be a curative poet for pain and suffering is not in doubt. But the connection between such complex meditations as 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' and the ghastly images of murder and terror that flash by us every day is hard to state. Sometimes Scott seems to regard

photojournalism as raw, unmediated visions, whereas I suppose that the majority of images we see 'from the front' are the work of highly trained professionals, working within some clearly defined aesthetics. I wonder, too, about the degrees of liberal sympathy he assumes everyone will want to feel when faced with such images. But these are questions to ponder, not to answer abstractly. As Scott concludes: 'these are questions about the limits of sympathy that were raised by a young English poet two centuries earlier in a different political climate. They have failed to go away.' (235)

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Stuart Peterfreund, *Shelley Among Others: The Play of the Intertext and the Idea of Language*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. Pp. 404. £38.50. ISBN 0801867517.

Benjamin Colbert, *Shelley's Eye: Travel Writing and Aesthetic Vision*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. Pp. 272. £45. ISBN 0754604853.

Stuart Peterfreund's examination of the relational dyad of metaphor and metonymy, in *Shelley Among Others*, highlights his study's affinity with Jerrold Hogle's *Shelley's Process* (1988) and William Ulmer's *Shelleyan Eros* (1990). In *A Defence*, Peterfreund locates Shelley's division of language into the metaphoric and metonymic within a wider debate about 'the problem of the relationship between language *and* some other entity' (1) conducted by David Hume, William Drummond, Johann Herder, and Giambattista Vico. This definition of Shelley's idea of language conditions the tragic demise of *Alastor's* poet-figure, who dramatises a 'crucial lack of childhood home in which to learn the language of love' (81). The alienated wanderings of Shelley's poet-figure trace a physical and emotional terrain of unfathomable depths and impossible heights

comprised from 'a landscape of twining and twinning, where entities presumably antithetical exist in inseparable dyadic pairings' (85).

Peterfreund is constantly aware of the patterns of textual cross-references within the Shelleyan canon noting, for instance, connections between the close of 'Ozymandias' and the time-ravaged pyramids of *Queen Mab* that bear '[t]he name of him whose pride had heaped them there' (quoted, 54), and how the symbolic geography of *Alastor* prefigures the spatial and temporal modes experience of *The Triumph of Life*. These numerous literary allusions beyond the Shelley oeuvre establish a complex dialogue with the aesthetics and politics of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which contemplates the painful self-realisation of a disjuncture between the visionary and the ordinary. Such an awakening has *Alastor's* poet-figure, the poem's Wordsworthian narrator, and even Shelley himself enacting a failure of transcendence that has been defined, by Tilottama Rajan, as a 'double negation' (quoted, 99). Reconciling these differences between the ordinary and the visionary is the dilemma to which, in Peterfreund's view, Shelley's subsequent poetry returns with the hope that 'a recuperation of [poetic] voice' (99) is still a viable possibility.

With subtle differences between lyric and narrative, Shelley's early poetry of 'Mont Blanc', 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', and *The Revolt of Islam* favours the recovery of a 'monological' (173) voice. Realising 'his preference for the dialogic (and metaphoric) over the monological (and metonymic)', Shelley experiments with writing *Rosalind and Helen* and *Julian and Maddalo* as variations on the eclogue which, as Charles J. Rzepka notes is 'a genre that includes both dialogue and lyric' (quoted, 181). Ultimately, Shelley's Maniac from *Julian and Maddalo* resigns himself to the impossibility of 'reconciliation or recuperation' (216) of such polyphonic expression and he becomes a 'cautionary tale' (216) to the would-be poet. The Maniac embodies 'the type of failed poet who must be cast off by Shelley if he is to embrace the vitally metaphorical language of poetry, espouse the dialogic, and aspire to poetic greatness' (217).

Shelley's other transitional poems, including 'Two Spirits _ An Allegory' and 'Ode to the West Wind', replay the Shelleyan speaker confronted by 'yet another [deferred] aporetic absence of closure' (219). Such moments attest to a fundamental impulse that drives Shelley's poetry to test whether metaphoric language can 'imagine in good faith being "outside" history' (217).

This strand of Shelleyan poetics later develops into a posthumous anxiety of imagining 'before the fact what it means to become literary history' (266). Shelley's last poems are considered by Peterfreund to be performing a 'romance of dematerialisation' (268) in which the 'fantasy of losing one's material identity but not her or his transcendent and immaterial being' (268) is played out. Troubled by a sense of 'language that *defines* historical time' (269), Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and *Adonais* strive for a condition of 'language that can somehow transcend the contingencies of the material and the temporal' (270) in spite of their inextricable links with the historical. Shelley's late works occupy a threshold between history and a-historical existence, chaos and order, silence and sound. Yet Shelley sustains his conviction that poetic language, by virtue of 'the human mind's imaginings' (317), may temporarily salvage order and cohesion from the random flotsam and jetsam of being. By the tragic close of Shelley's creative voyage, his mastery over a poetics of hopeful despair is nearly complete.

Benjamin Colbert contextualises Shelley's poetic career and his responses to the European landscapes in relation to Romantic travel writing. Colbert's *Shelley's Eye: Travel Writing and Aesthetic Vision* chimes with recent critical reassessments of Romanticism by Nigel Leask's *British Romantic Writers and the East*, Jennifer Wallace's *Shelley and Greece: Rethinking Romantic Hellenism* (1997), and Alan Weinberg's *Shelley's Italian Experience* (1991). Colbert rejects the assumption of Leask and Wallace 'that Shelleyan geography is an over-determined textual space' and 'investigates the instabilities already apparent in the observing "eye" of travel writing' (7) to tease out the genre's

implicit contradictions. Performing an unconventional 'double gesture' (8), Shelley's tourist's eye is turned both outward and inward, as 'the traveller looks at a landscape, he or she is always looking at him or herself looking as well' (8). Sceptically, Shelley's inward turned eye examines 'the ways in which perception and expression are implicated in the cultural conditioning of the age' and weighs up what kind of 'revolutionary aesthetic might be forged to fit the needs of post-revolutionary Europe' (8). Interrogating the assumptions behind much contemporary travel discourse, Shelley's own travel writing and poetry of 'meta-cultural encounter' (10) reconfigures 'the social, historical, and political meanings of public spaces or signs in terms of the individuated consciousness of an ideal tourist' (10).

Colbert meticulously scrutinises the changing role of travel writing in the post-Napoleonic era in which 'landscapes were celebrated or mourned as scenes of martial power' (15). Revising the critical consensus of *Alastor* as Shelley's corrective to Wordsworth of *The Excursion*, Colbert understands Shelley's oriental travel narrative, through the poem's sympathies with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), as seeking to 'establish universal cultural values in restoration Europe' (48). This sense of space as culturally and ideologically constructed is also the moot point of *Alastor* which exposes a hiatus 'between narrative rhetorical structure and the subject of narration' (72).

Colbert elaborates upon how the inter-play of Shelley's poetics and travel narrative, in 'Mont Blanc', discloses 'how the worldly mind figures or reconfigures the European landscape' (91). Unlike many contemporary travel accounts, Shelley considers the worth of a new or unknown region to be measurable from its resistance to the gaze of the observing tourist. Similarly, Shelley's journal letter account, from the *History of the Six Weeks Tour*, of his encounter with 'Mont Blanc' foregrounds the processes of subjectivity through a choice of 'language [that] recalls particular attention to the temporality of creativity' and the

workings of ‘observation, memory, and writing’ (99). ‘Shelley naturalises his aesthetic’ and privileges, Colbert suggests, ‘the human mind’s appropriation of the object world in all of its secondary capacities’ (99). Within these broader debates about the picturesque, Shelley’s duality of aesthetic vision is ‘a regulated instability at the moment of appropriation with which to suggest the transcendental instability of all identity’ (100). Shelley’s final question, in ‘Mont Blanc’, emphasises the central paradox of his poetic vision and the ‘complicity of nature’s non-verbal voice and human language [which are] both...structured out of the same space of silence and non-meaning’ (114).

Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills illustrates further how Shelley’s actual experience of, and poetic response to, Italy was influenced by those visual frames of travel writing. According to Colbert, ‘the effacement of natural moments’ (147) and ‘beauties of [Venetian] architecture’ (150) become, for Shelley, signs of personal and universal loss and memory. Shelley’s *Euganean Hills* press ‘towards a pure form beyond intertextuality’ (158) which render the ‘touristic gaze as an aesthetic vision’ (160) capable of — as in *Prometheus Unbound* — restoring nature’s and man’s ruinous forms to envisage a ‘social vision of utopia on the foundations of Western culture’ (204). Where *Prometheus Unbound* heralds ‘a Greek apotheosis’ with the prospect of humanity’s unbridled liberty, Shelley’s final completed work, *Hellas*, approximates a ‘metaphysics of history’ (233) and ‘psychology and historiography that would explain the decline and fall of empires’ (229). Shelley’s aesthetic vision endeavours ‘to see the deep structure of his age...and to reform its future’ (236) and require him, like *The Triumph of Life*’s narrator, to be ‘[b]oth a spectator of and a reluctant participant in travel culture’ (236).

Peterfreund’s study of Shelley may be less theorised than those conducted by Hogle and Ulmer, but his critical appreciation of the poet displays a lively intellectual sensitivity to Shelley’s shifting word-play. Colbert’s historically innovative readings open up a fascinatingly new panorama for the antitheses of

Shelley's dual poetic vision. Both these critical studies re-affirm Shelley as a mental and cultural traveller, who circumnavigates established rhetorical figures to discover the ever renewable, expansive, and transforming energy of the metaphorical.

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Sharon Ruston, *Shelley and Vitality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. 229. £45. ISBN 1403918244.

In this welcome addition to the study of literature and the sciences, Sharon Ruston conducts a new exploration of Percy Shelley's engagement with late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century medicine. With particular reference to the controversial 'Vitality' debate (1814-19) between London surgeons John Abernethy and his former apprentice William Lawrence, *Shelley and Vitality* forges strong new links between the poet's thought and work, and the medical circle that centred on St. Bart's hospital at that time. Using a tightly focused biographical approach, and making persuasive use of rare books and manuscript sources, the author presents us with a convincing case that Shelley was more closely aware of the debate than has hitherto been appreciated. Close parallels are drawn between this clash of medical minds and the radical politics of the day, whereby the discourse of vitalism and Shelley's use of its imagery and vocabulary as a revolutionary metaphor in his writing is reassessed.

Where Abernethy's vitalism presented life as independent matter super-added to the body, Lawrence's rival view saw it as simply the sum of the working body's parts and operations. In the early nineteenth century, such a controversy could never remain a merely scientific matter. In Abernethy's model, the base body required the control of a higher influence to render it vital: an acceptably hierarchical point of view, reflecting conservative religious and political values.

The Lawrencian view suggested an alarmingly radical alternative, with the body assuming an almost 'republican' independence of any need for a higher authority. As Ruston points out, the publication in 1819 of Lawrence's *Lectures on Physiology* drew strong criticism from those who saw it as godless and revolutionary. In that year of Peterloo and the 'Gagging Acts', he was accused of 'inculcating the young susceptible minds of trainee British surgeons with precisely the same ideals that had led to the French Revolution.' (19) Lawrence became the subject of a pamphleting campaign calling for his resignation.

After a concise and highly detailed overview of the Vitality debate in her first chapter, Ruston moves on in chapter 2 to discuss Percy Shelley's knowledge of 'the Science of Life'. Like an increasing number of Shelley scholars, Ruston recognises that the image of Shelley in recent decades as an amateur interested only in bangs and sparks is as inaccurate as it is unfair. She rightly points out that much damage has been done by Shelley's early biographers Hogg and Medwin, whose disparaging references have had a tendency to 'ridicule the poet's enthusiasm and portray him as a dreamer, not in touch with the realities of science' (75). Ruston conducts a thorough exploration of Shelley's very real interest in contemporary science, shedding much new light on this aspect of his life: strong links are forged with the intellectual community surrounding St. Bart's in 1811; Shelley is placed firmly within Godwin's 'Bracknell circle' during 1813-14; and the poet's notes on the work of Sir Humphry Davy are shown to indicate a more profound understanding of chemistry than has hitherto been accepted.

And then to the poetry. Chapter Three presents us with a fascinating new reading of *Prometheus Unbound* as, amongst other things, a fantastic enactment of the Vitality debate, in which Shelley uses questions raised by the Lawrence-Abernethy controversy as metaphorical imagery for his political allusions. Thus, for example, in a very close reading of Act One, the furies are seen as carrying out a 'dreadful inversion of the life process' (107), anatomising and exploring the metabolism of the eponymous hero, with references to 'the fire within' (l.476)

being seen as referring to the most contemporary ideas of the vital principle. But this is no simple one-sided interpretation; Prometheus is seen as fighting a battle between submitting to external influences on his vitality on the one hand (i.e. king, church, and Abernethy), or redefining life *à la* Lawrence, whereby man becomes 'King/Over himself'.

This process is seen as being still in progress in the Europe of Shelley's day, thus both vital principles have an equal reality, locked in a continuing political struggle. In presenting this view, Ruston also offers an explanation for the question asked by earlier commentators such as Butter and King-Hele as to why Shelley waited until 1819 to write his most scientific of poems, long after he had given up reading much science or doing experiments. Ruston points out that this scientifically 'quiet' period in Shelley's writing, and the timing of *Prometheus Unbound's* subsequent emergence, are both much less problematic when viewed as also being the very years of the vitality debate, which came to a head at the very time the poem was being written.

Subsequent chapters go on to explore other ways in which Shelley used the vocabulary and ideas of the vitality debate to describe and contend political and poetic ideas. Chapter four discusses at some length Shelley's oft-used metaphor of the 'veil' in the vitalist context, and its use in poems such as *The Sensitive Plant*. Here, Ruston also explores the Shelleyan principle of mutability within the Lawrencian sense of living bodies constantly rotating the materials they use and discard, continually composing and decomposing themselves (139). In chapter five, *The Poetry of Life*, works such as *Adonais* are reassessed from a vitalist point of view. The elegiac twists and turns, the philosophical musings upon death, and the graphic descriptions of physical decomposition are reviewed in the light of Shelley's engagement with new ideas such as the role of 'vital air' in both decay and renewal.

Perhaps most importantly of all, *Shelley and Vitality* does not follow the pattern of obsessive glossing and search for 'hidden meaning' that is so often the inevitable course taken by literary-scientific studies. Instead, Ruston presents vitality as providing an idiom within which Shelley was able to develop a new poetry. The vital principle went beyond providing metaphorical language and imagery, and was the driving force behind Shelley's poetics. Both poet and poetry were mutually animating forces, enabling poet to create 'Forms more real than living man', and enabling poetry to present to us something more 'real' than the empirical world, and which transcends the biological life of the poet.

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Drummond Bone, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 305. £15.99. ISBN 0521786762.

Byron is the fifth of the Romantic 'Big Six' to be granted his own *Cambridge Companion*, along with Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley from this period. Percy Bysshe Shelley is the only poet of the old Romantic canon to be so far unhonoured in this way. The *Byron Companion* reflects the renaissance in Byron literary studies in the years since the bicentenary in 1988 and the interest in Byron's life which continues to flourish, with several major critical works and three major biographies published in the last few years.

This *Companion* certainly uses the poet's life to predicate the work, with nearly one-third of the main text directly addressing biographical themes, including the relationship between Byron and his biographers; the business of his publishing; his politics, and his sexuality. Although this section's heading - 'Historical contexts' - seems initially misleading, the papers here and elsewhere in the collection quickly make one aware of how much Byron and his historical

context are entwined: perhaps no other poet has lived so much in the eye of history or contributed not only to the politics of his birth country but also to that of many others on several continents.

The aim of the *Cambridge Companions* is to provide 'an invaluable resource for [both] students and scholars', and this difficult task - of providing not only an introduction to existing scholarship but also advancing it in an accessible way - is generally adroitly handled in this collection. These essays not only paraphrase, report, reflect or advance on material already published but also tackle new topics. Malcolm Kelsall's paper on Byron's politics usefully summarises and updates his 1987 book on the same subject, and Peter Cochran's chapter covers the huge sweep of European Byronism both succinctly and with attention to relevant detail, while Philip Martin reads *Childe Harold II* in a way which 'is not radically disruptive of established views but does require the reader to look again at *Childe Harold's* most familiar characteristics ... as if they were being seen for the first time' (78). Byron's twentieth-century editor Jerome McGann returns to themes concerning biography and literature which he explored as early as his *Fiery Dust* in 1968 and revisits them in terms of modern ideas about performance and the genre of the lyric, while Andrew Nicholson uses the detailed knowledge gained from his edition of the *Complete Miscellaneous Prose* to ruminate interestingly on topics such as Byron's highly creative use of the dash and 'the bond, the tactile intimacy, between Byron and his writing materials' (193). Bernard Beatty brings to the oft-posed question about Byron's relation to Romanticism and Augustanism a new angle which considers eighteenth-century culture as providing both a moral anchor for Byron, in terms of its recognition of the connection between actions and consequences, and a kind of genetic melting-pot out of which Byron created new and extraordinarily original literary life. Some papers provide what are essentially reflective paraphrases of the works; some explore areas which are surprisingly rarely trodden (such as Anne Barton's chapter on Byron and Shakespeare), and others strike out into

new theoretical approaches, such as Jane Stabler's final chapter on Byron's postmodernism and intertextuality.

The *Companion* emphasises the breadth and depth of Byron's *oeuvre*, and it is perhaps unrealistic to expect such a collection to cover all aspects fully. However, the lack of a chapter dedicated to Byron's letters and journals must be deplored by any reader, whether new to Byron or already familiar with the wonderful variety, wit and fascination of his correspondence. Another surprising absence is any specifically feminist approach to Byron's work. Caroline Franklin's study of Byron's heroines is much-cited in the book, but it is a pity that she could not be persuaded to contribute a new chapter, and although Susan J Wolfson has written illuminatingly on gender issues in Byron's work, that is not her subject here. Is it an accurate picture of modern Byron scholarship that only three contributors out of 16 here are women? 'Gender' as a topic is slightly awkwardly combined with Byron's own sexuality in Andrew Elfenbein's paper, which, however, offers new and perceptive insights on both subjects. Also missing is material about cultural Byronism, such as Byron's portraits which have been admirably catalogued recently by Annette Peach. The relative amount of attention given to different poetical works is also somewhat odd: while *Childe Harold* is studied in four different chapters, *Don Juan* (widely regarded as Byron's greatest work by the authors in this collection) only gets one, and that it has to share with *Childe Harold IV* and with *Beppo*.

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Richard Cardwell, ed., *The Reception of Byron in Europe*. London and New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004. 2 Vols. Pp. 500. £195. ISBN 0826468446

This is an impressive collection of essays, and part of a very impressive (if expensive) series on the reception of British and Irish authors in Europe. Ossian, Austen, Coleridge, Scott and Shelley, and others from different periods, are all covered by the series, but it seems that Byron is the only Romantic to get two volumes. His case clearly warrants them – Richard Cardwell’s collection offers a powerful reminder of just how ‘big’ Byron was right across nineteenth-century Europe. As the essays make very clear, Byron was the ‘standard’ against which writer after writer, indeed national literature after national literature, judged themselves.

Not that his reception across Europe was consistent, or even consistently positive, and no one standard ‘pattern of reception’ (7) emerges from this collection. Each essay follows the reception history of Byron through the nineteenth- and twentieth-century ‘fashions, tastes, new literary and aesthetic preoccupations, new and unforeseen events and political interventions’ (7) of a single European culture. They combine to offer a fascinating introduction to, and study of, the ways in which European countries and cultures ‘used Byron as a mirror to their own preoccupations and obsessions’ (1).

Byron’s reception in twenty countries and cultures is covered. Some countries are given two chapters by different authors (France, Spain, Italy); some are dealt with by two authors in a single chapter (Germany, Russia). Others are discussed in a single chapter by a single author. Almost all the chapters are written by people from, or working within, the country or culture they discuss – the ‘List of Contributors’ is quite a read in itself – so that these essays belong to, and extend in various ways, the traditions they discuss. The collection, in other words, adds to its discussion of past receptions of Byron some fascinating insights into the current and ongoing reception of the poet throughout Europe.

Almost all the chapters are published here for the first time. There is one slightly disappointing exception – the chapter on Russia, which first appeared in

the collection these volumes supersede, Paul Graham Trueblood's 1981 volume, *Byron's Political and Cultural Influence in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. The essay is still interesting and useful, but a new view of Byron's presence in Russian culture to go with the new views of Byron's presence elsewhere would have been very welcome too. This is nevertheless a minor gripe. Cardwell has gathered together an astonishing collection of scholars and essays to produce an invaluable treasure-trove of information and ideas.

Normally, each chapter offers either a broad overview of trends or a focus on a few important or exemplary figures. Each offers at least some discussion of, among other things: translations of Byron's work and biographies of Byron; the influence of Byron's life, death and work on poets, novelists, dramatists, critics and philosophers; literary, critical and political constructions and appropriations of both Byron and his poetry. And each chapter also supplies details of the publication of Byron's texts – dates, languages, whether in part or in full and, if in part, which parts – as well as the details of the progressive translation of Byron's *oeuvre* into the language of the country or culture covered. Many also offer critical assessments of translations. As a result, we now have an excellent source of factual information about what Byron texts were available, and when, and in what form they were available, for virtually the whole of Europe.

While no overall 'pattern of reception' emerges, various trends do re-occur across a number of cultures. These will be very familiar to many readers. Byron was repeatedly associated with freedom on the one hand and existential gloom on the other. The details of his life again and again presented his readers with a moral challenge. In country after country, the fact of his death in Greece transformed Byron into a political icon. Similarly, *Childe Harold* was usually (though far from always) known early on, in one form or another, while Byron's early narratives, especially *The Giaour* and *The Corsair*, had a massive impact, ideologically and aesthetically, on a number of national literary traditions. *Manfred* and *Cain* were seminal in many countries. *Don Juan* encountered

various kinds of censorship and usually generated controversy. But there are a great many surprises too, especially when it comes to the publication and translation history of Byron's works – surprises that disturb cherished assumptions, undermine standard understandings and open up whole new avenues of enquiry. The enormous quantity of information here will generate reassessments of all kinds of things for years to come.

The inclusion of an essay on Turkey and the Orient in a collection on Byron's reception in Europe might appear slightly odd, but this essay takes its cue from the widespread European sense, described in a number of other chapters, of Byron as representative of European Romanticism, even of Western culture itself, and brings the volume to a nicely open end with a discussion of a few of Byron's non-European sympathies, allegiances and readers. The inclusion of the chapter thereby allows the collection as a whole to end with an acknowledgement of its limits, bringing into view as it does what lies beyond the collection's remit. The chapter on Armenia offers a further, if tantalisingly brief, glimpse of this: as a result of Byron's visits to the Armenian monastery on the island of St Lazarus in Venice, its author tells us, Armenian translations of Byron were published in Turkey, Persia, Azerbaijan and India. Perhaps someone is already working on the 'rest of the world' volumes.

The volumes edited by Cardwell, however, offer a monumental study of Byron's reception in Europe. They do not, of course, offer the final word on this, and never could. The factual information they contain often signals just how much research there is left to do, while that information is embedded in essays that are unavoidably interpretative. The readings the essays offer – of Byron's texts as well as of myriad European writers and texts – are stimulating and offer all kinds of insights. They are also, inevitably, contestable and many of the readings offered here will undoubtedly be contested and contradicted – indeed, in the second 2005 issue of the *Byron Journal* there is already an essay on Byron's Orientalism that forcefully argues exactly the opposite case to that

argued in the chapter here on 'Byron, Turkey and the Orient'. Yet the debates this collection will generate and fuel will be recognitions of its enormous value on all sorts of levels. Cardwell and the twenty-five other contributors to this collection have done a magnificent job.

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Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 222. £45. ISBN 0521845092.

In this study of the expressive body in elocution, preaching, acting and the novel, Paul Goring traces the supersession of a relatively restrained 'classical' style by the more passionately evocative modes associated with Sensibility. In these the 'rhetoric' of the body was harnessed to a moral end in the persuasive communication of virtuous feelings. The areas of his study display complex interlinkings, such as Richardson's debt to acting theory and Sterne's use of the sermon in *Tristram Shandy*, but the movement is also vitally associated with other cultural projects. The forging of a 'British' identity is one of the objects of Thomas Sheridan's elocutionary endeavours and a general reformation of manners and morals by the power of oratory is an ambition shared by the preacher James Fordyce with a similar stress on affective communication. The softer affections and the 'manly tear,' whose power is often lauded, bring into play the 'feminization' of culture; the obtrusion of 'private' feelings into the public arena implicates the ambiguous boundaries of public and private explored by Habermas. The importance of *speaking* itself in this era of the putative 'public sphere' raises questions about the class associations of the evolving style of 'polite' speaking and its exclusions.

The theory varied remarkably little during the century, mostly due to ubiquitous plagiarism from an early guide to oratory by Michel Le Faucheur and

accepted ideas about the universal language of passion, transparency of expression and contagion of effect. If one really felt the emotions, by summoning up a 'strong idea' of the subject, then the natural signs would follow and one's audience would be affected similarly. What varied in application was the extent to which this natural eloquence of the passions was to be improved upon by study and, most importantly, restricted to conform to polite usage. For Le Faucheur no licking or biting of lips, no frantic gestures or contortions of the face should interfere with a dignified oral delivery. Such stateliness conferred on the orator, preacher, barrister or actor the authority of a patrician, aristocratic culture. Gildon's *Life of Betterton* celebrated the actor's mastery of this style as reflecting his own upright civic values and recommended it just as others were turning to the less restricted naturalism of Garrick. Garrick's account of suiting the action to the dramatic character and specific occasion gives little in the way of general application but Aaron Hill gives detailed indications of the state of the muscles and facial expressions that are the typical language of the passions. Publications on acting, as Goring points out, served a general interest in oratory that opened up considerable commercial opportunities. The nervous body of sensibility comes into its own in the work of Dr John Hill, but for him true acting displays regulated sensibility, the one tear instead of the deluge. This will, perhaps paradoxically, be found more 'natural' and effective by the audience. If, as Goring claims, acting 'show-cased' the new, polite body of bourgeois sentimentalism, Hill produces the model of a rhetorical body, whose aesthetic effect on others is the measure of its naturalness as well as of its value in conveying educative virtuous feeling. Goring perceives this rhetoric of sensibility in the novel, where feelings are compulsively exhibited and their exhibition observed, usually with improving results. This is a useful insight into Richardson's methods, which introduce more mediated emotional display than the form of the epistolary novel would naturally encourage. Again Goring stresses the general, public importance of such didactic techniques; reading is not yet privatized consumption but a means of forging a new collective sensibility.

Goring is cautious in his theoretical approach. There is no Bakhtinian mythologizing of the body; it is thoroughly malleable to cultural appropriation. A study of rhetoric cannot, however, explore the cultural forces behind such appropriation as fully as, say, Jon Mee's study of enthusiasm. Like Mee, he finds ambivalence in some writers towards orator Henley and Methodists, those excluded and reviled excessive bodies whose lower-class audiences are moved to madness rather than virtue. They transgress from the model of 'bourgeois politeness' that Goring takes as the achievement of this movement, but these terms are problematic. 'Politeness,' as Goring shows, is a model of social relations that is always in contention and always in the process of formation. 'Bourgeois' is applied to a movement that ended abruptly around 1800 before the establishment of classic bourgeois formations. The simple model of communication that has formerly been attributed to writers and readers is problematized by an 'epilogue' on Sterne displaying a more sophisticated approach to the presentation of sensibility. The book hints provocatively at these problems but is very successful in its major purpose of establishing the wide-ranging cultural importance of this 'somatic' school of communication from which so much was hoped.

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Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 190. £48. ISBN 052184584X.

Readers and viewers of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello* are often unaware of the wider theatrical traditions within which these plays were originally written and performed. As Virginia Mason Vaughan's fine book relates, between the beginning of the sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, the black African was to become an enduring stock character in English theatre. His

or her depiction was affected in varying degrees by a Medieval homiletic tradition which equated blackness and damnation, by travellers' tales, by encounters with Africans resident in England and by the techniques of a dramatist's immediate predecessors. The Moor of early sixteenth century civic and court spectacle – used as an 'item of display' to signify the opulence, power and wealth of a performance's sponsor – was succeeded by a vibrant tradition of theatrical 'impersonation' which encompassed Shakespeare's Aaron and Othello, Peele's Eleazar and Behn's Abdelazar.

Vaughan stresses the fact that the depiction of black Africans on English stages tells us little about the identity or status of the real people lying behind the theatrical charade. Instead, these characters 'are the projections of imaginations that capitalize on the assumptions, fantasies, fears, and anxieties of England's pale-complexioned audiences'. The book is distinctive in its focus on plays as theatre and on blackface as a theatrical trope constructed from interlinked conventions such as appearance, linguistic tropes, speech patterns, plot situations and the use of asides and soliloquies. Rather than studying a play such as *Othello* or *Titus Andronicus* in isolation, Vaughan is attentive to recurring patterns: 'character types, plot situations, tropes, and other performative tactics ... repeated from play to play'. She is therefore interested in not only those characters who are 'truly' black Africans, but also those characters – such as Millicent in Brome's *The English Moor* or Francisco in Webster's *The White Devil* – who impersonate them.

Although she self-deprecatingly describes her studies of individual plays as a series of 'snap-shots', *Performing Blackness on English Stages* encompasses an exciting range of neglected works. To be sure, *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* both receive detailed examination, but they are positioned alongside a range of less well-known plays. These include Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, Dekker, Haughton and Day's *Lust's Dominion, or the Lascivious Queen*, Marston's *Sophonisba*, Rowley's *All's Lost by Lust*, Brome's *The Novella*,

Harding's *Sicily and Naples*, Heminge's *The Fatal Contract* and Berkeley's *The Lost Lady*. It is highly illuminating to encounter *Titus Andronicus* in the context of *The Battle of Alcazar* or *Lust's Dominion*; while Shakespeare's Aaron is clearly influenced by Peele's *Muly Mahamet*, the representation of Eleazar in *Lust's Dominion* is an early demonstration of the way in which *Titus Andronicus* established a paradigm for the depiction of the Moorish villain. Elsewhere, the placing of a chapter on *Othello* after one focusing the employment of Moorish characters in bedtricks is highly suggestive, and it is refreshing to see plays of the 1630s receive detailed attention.

The bulk of the book focuses on the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but these book-ended chapters focus on blackness in medieval and early sixteenth century theatre, and on the development of the theatrical Moor in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these last chapters, Vaughan's 'snap-shot' technique is most in evidence. The first revisits not only the concerns of earlier chapters but also the narratives themselves, focusing on three 'blood and thunder' tragedies of the 1670s, all of which were adapted from earlier plays: Settle's *Love and Revenge* (based on *The Fatal Contract*), Behn's *Abdelazar* (based on *Lust's Dominion*) and Ravenscroft's *Titus Andronicus*. Similarly, the final chapter focuses on just two highly popular plays, Southerne's adaptation of Behn's *Oroonoko* and Young's *The Revenge*.

Perhaps the most contentious aspect of Vaughan's argument arises from her close attention to the mechanics of theatrical convention and to the 'synergistic interaction of audience expectation and actorly performance'. Drawing on actor Hugh Quarshie's account of his discomfort with *Othello* ('if a black actor plays *Othello* does he not risk making racial stereotypes seem legitimate and even true?'), she suggests that the metatheatricality imposed on the plays by blackface techniques may be crucial. 'The white actor in blackface', she argues, 'may speak and act in ways that reinforce stereotypes about black people, but because he is not the thing he pretends to be and the audience

knows it, his gestures and attitudes suggest that his identity is adopted, not inherited'. In casting plays such as Othello naturalistically, we perhaps risk reifying the (often-racist) assumptions that lie behind early modern representations of blackness. I am not confident that reviving blackface performance of these roles by white actors is necessarily a solution (and Vaughan suggests it only tentatively, as a possible experiment for the reconstructed Globe Theatre), but this is a problem which we should not merely ignore.

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Neil McCaw, ed., *Writing Irishness in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*.
Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 248. £45. ISBN 0754639479

Neil McCaw's abandonment of the seductive 'Exploding the Canons' as the title of this volume when he found it too reductive and simplistic, is evidence in itself of the difficulty of adequately containing and defining the myriad of interrelationships at work in the creation and depiction of Irishness (and Britishness) in the nineteenth century. The wide-ranging essays in this volume follow a broadly chronological order, and deal with representations of Irishness in literary criticism, in translations of Irish works into English, in the English press, and in the writing of Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Lever, Trollope, Thackeray, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde, and, less extensively, Charles Kickham, Letitia McClintock, Emily Lawless, George Moore, Rosa Mullholland, William O'Brien and Edna Lyall.

The introduction is followed by a judiciously argued collaborative chapter by Rolf Loeber, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber and Joep Leerssen. In Irish literary criticism it detects calls for the establishment of a national Irish literature which long predate the Irish literary revival of the 1880s, and is interesting for the

insight it provides into the issues raised and the influences at work in the debate as to what should constitute an Irish national canon. Anne MacCarthy's engaging analysis of Edward Walsh's translations of Irish songs into English could serve to illustrate efforts described by Loeber *et al* to encourage the employment of cultural forms as a means of communicating and preserving Irish nationhood, for she points to the musicality of Walsh's translations as operating as an immutable expression of national identity.

Leon Litvack's assessment of Dickens's personal and literary interaction with Ireland astutely discerns the author as at once engaging with and disengaged from the country. The difficulty authors encounter in finding a comfortable position for themselves and their writing in relation to Ireland is one which recurs in the volume. Andrew Blake argues that Charles Lever both employs and confutes Irish stereotypes as he struggles to place himself in terms of national identity, while Neil McCaw perceptively elucidates how their approach to and involvement with Ireland influences the Irish writing of Trollope and Thackeray.

Trollope's significance in this area of study is signalled by his reappearance, firstly in Jane Elizabeth Dougherty's consideration of Phineas Finn which, while it tends to underestimate the degree to which Trollope routinely complicates notions of femininity and masculinity, nevertheless makes a strong case for Trollope's failure to employ Finn to argue convincingly for the tenability of the Union. His *The Landleaguers* is then examined with an ambitious number of other novels dealing with the Irish Land question in the final chapter by Neil McCaw and Carla King which demonstrates the value of fiction as historical evidence, particularly with regard to the psychological impact of the Land War.

There is much of interest in other chapters: Michael de Nie's examination of how at key periods the British press both reflected and reinforced Irish stereotypes, ultimately encouraging the idea that somehow a native Irishness

was responsible for the nation's problems; Maureen O'Connor's interesting analysis of the connections between Lady Morgan, Oscar Wilde and Charles Maturin. The volume also illustrates however, one of the potential pitfalls of research of this kind. It is an essential part of the process to revisit canonical works alert to the possibility of unnoticed or underestimated evidence of Irishness but this can sometimes result in excessive, inadequately substantiated claims. Thus while Kathleen Constable convincingly establishes the Irishness of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* by using an argument which rests firmly on textual evidence, her contention that *Jane Eyre* is an allegory of Union seems less secure, not least because it underestimates Brontë's concentration on the issue of the nature and rôle of women and fails to account for the negative association of Ireland with Jane's threatened exile. Similarly Neil McCaw's re-examination of George Eliot is valuable for its insight into her humanitarian and political interest in Ireland but relies too heavily on Arthur Donnithorne's posting to Ireland in reading this interest as translating itself into an allegorical representation of England and Ireland in *Adam Bede*.

If, however, McCaw is correct in his conviction that the monograph which he once intended to write on the representation of the Irish in English canonical fictions 'is still out there in some form', in addition to a series of full length studies of the Irish in the writing of individual authors, there is a need for more volumes like this one with a range of contributors from a variety of academic disciplines before any one person can meaningfully contemplate a definitive analysis of this fascinating but dauntingly complex and vast subject. In the meantime candidates for the task will find much of value in this book.

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Neil Curry, *Christopher Smart*. Tavistock: British Council and Northcote House, 2005. Pp. 118. Hb: £35.00, ISBN 074631023. Pb: £11.99, ISBN 0746310145.

Neil Curry's critical study belongs to the estimable 'Writers and their Work' series and adds fresh substance to the efflorescence of scholarly and critical attention that continues to illumine the genius of this *lusus naturae* of eighteenth-century poetry. Christopher Smart has variously been constructed as 'poor Kit', deep in his cups and drowning in debt; a holy fool 'for the sake of Christ', praising his Creator, naked and ecstatic in the rain; and a precursor to Gerard Manley Hopkins in his rapturous reading of the created world as 'the poetry of Christ'. Amidst the bricolage of contrastive modes and 'alienations of mind' that characterize his life and work, Curry attests to Smart's astonishing capacity to be 'equally at home and equally as skilled in translating Horace as he was performing a drag act in a show called *Mrs Knight's Oratory*. And while he was writing and editing magazines such as *The Student* and *The Midwife* under pen names as unlikely as Zosimus Zephyr and Ebenezer Pentweazle, he was also writing his five winning entries for the Seatonian Prize at Cambridge' (6). The broad spectrum of Smart's talent is matched by his inward possession of a 'greater compass both of mirth and melancholy than another' (*Jubilate Agno*, B, l.132). Robin Skelton has aligned Smart with Clare, Cowper and Swift; poets in direct touch with truths that are 'underneath, or beyond or outside'. To exist 'without walls', however, is to be terrifyingly vulnerable:

My nerves convuls'd shook fearful of their fate,
My mind lay open to the powers of night.
(*A Song to David* [1763], ll. 69–70).

In 1756 Smart was confined for insanity, first in private lodgings and later in the London madhouse of St Luke's Hospital. The nature of Smart's 'madness' is an issue that Curry seems disinclined to interrogate; indeed, his response on this point may seem dismissive, even callous: 'Of course one feels sorry for the man,

but locking him up could be regarded as having been the making of him as a poet: no drink, no debts, no need to scribble for money' (15). Smart's recent biographer, Chris Mounsey, privileges him as a 'martyred satirist', takes arms against 250 years of received opinion and propounds the credible theory that the diagnosis of Smart's 'insanity' was largely driven by the bitter animus of his father-in-law. In 1763 Boswell records Dr Johnson as saying that 'Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world' (Geoffrey Grigson, *Christopher Smart*, 17). In Johnson's tolerant view, Smart's deviations stretched from the banal—'he did not love clean linen', to the sublime: 'falling on his knees, and saying his prayers in the streets' (ibid.). Smart thus complied wholeheartedly with the scriptural adjuration to 'rejoice evermore' and 'pray without ceasing', but as Emily Dickinson's caveat makes brutally plain, those who flout culture's codes of normalcy will be punished:

Much madness is divinest sense
 To a discerning eye;
 Much sense the starkest madness.
 'Tis the majority
 In this, as all, prevails.
 Assent and you are sane;
 Demur,—you're straightway dangerous,
 And handled with a chain.
 ('Much madness is divinest sense')

Robert Browning felt that Smart's vision actually reached its 'zenith from his madhouse cell', pierced the 'screen/ 'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul' ('Parleyings with Certain People'). Rooted in Hebraic antiphonal precedent, riddling, punning and parabolical, the fragmented poem *Jubilate Agno* (*Rejoice in the Lamb*) that emerges from Smart's incarceration is nevertheless his most recondite, idiosyncratic and often most exciting work. Curry, a poet himself, submits this work to a reasonably detailed exegesis, with particular

attention to the most frequently anthologized section of the poem, Smart's contemplation of his cat:

For I will consider my Cat Geoffrey.
 For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him.
 For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.

Curry argues that Geoffrey 'represents in himself *all* [of the] twelve virtues, which play such an important part in Smart's thinking' and is 'worthy to be presented before the throne of grace' (31–2). Smart's apprehension of 'electrical fire' and 'spiritual substance' in this most domestic of creatures is testament to the kinetic force of his synthesizing imagination. Like his successor, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Smart drives language to the cognitive wire, conjoining all things 'counter, original, spare, strange', for one great purpose: to revive 'ADORATION' amongst ENGLISH-MEN'.

Curry's approach is that of the enthusiast rather than the pedant, and he succeeds in his intention of presenting Smart as a 'poet of Adoration and of Joy'. This compact study is unburdened by detailed allusion to theoretical issues or to current critical debates on Smart, but offers to the undergraduate and the interested general reader a clear, unpretentious avenue of access to a poet whose extraordinary worth is now increasingly recognized.

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Paul Dawson, David Powell and Eric Robinson, eds., *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period, 1822–1837*, Volume V. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. Pp. 822. £116. ISBN 0198123868.

Jonathan Bate, ed., *John Clare: Selected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004. Pp. 317. £9.99. ISBN 0571223710.

John Clare editors seem to have become increasingly blunt in what they hold to be the self-evident 'truths' behind editorial intervention. Since the 1960s, Clare has been published for the most part by the Clarendon Oxford editing team, and in 2003 they published the final volume of the complete poems, the substantial *Poems of the Middle Period* volume V, which includes corrections, additions and indexes to all nine volumes. They have also edited a handful of useful, much cheaper, paperback editions of poetry and prose for Carcanet. From the start of their project, they believed that Clare was a radical about language. Here they are introducing *Middle Period V*:

We came to the conclusion that Taylor's and Hessey's corrections took far more away from Clare's poetry than they contributed to its clarification. We do not accept the argument that, because Clare had sometimes passed proof for Taylor and Hessey, we should accept the corrected readings. We believe that Clare's genius is rooted in his language—in his vocabulary, his spelling, his syntax; his idiom, his tone and his use of dialect; even when this results in crude names for flowers or other natural phenomena. We believe that to change Clare's language is to alter his social and economic status and to destroy his local culture... In reading modernized editions of Clare, we are more often struck by the distortions of Clare's meanings that occur in them, than by the improvements made in the readings.

This is more than a manifesto: it is tantamount to a creed, a set of foundational, fundamental beliefs, with all the rhetorical repetition of a national and political constitution. Their Clare stands against standard grammar, against standard punctuation and is a resister of the hegemonic enforced codification and standardisation of language. Their Clare was never happy with editorial

intervention, advice or correction of any kind, even when he said he was. Their consequent claimed intention is to transcribe from Clare's manuscripts *exactly* as the poet wrote them down. But this does not mean they are always faithful to extant manuscripts. Where the poems were copied out by an amanuensis, the team corrects, sometimes silently, according to their beliefs about Clare's original intentions (*Later Poems*, vol. I, xii). Their resultant texts are sometimes new formations which *do not exist* in manuscript. Their editorial principle is thus more complex than plain transcription.

The editors of the Oxford complete poetry were joined in their textual primitivism, by Anne Tibble and Kelsey Thornton in *The Midsummer Cushion* (1979), Margaret Grainger in *Natural History Prose Writings* (1983) and by Mark Storey in *Letters* (1985). Because of the sheer range and quality of editions following this method, it has become the orthodoxy.

If the Oxford/Carcenet team and their followers are in the red corner, equating Clare's language with his 'economic status', then Jonathan Bate's Faber and Faber paperback selection and his Picador biography of the poet are in the blue corner, likewise claiming to do right by Clare, likewise claiming moral high ground. Compared with the Oxford/Carcenet Clare, Bate's is a different authorial creature entirely, one that encourages an active programme of editorial intervention. In his edition, Bate makes a case for the regularising and standardising of Clare's texts. He joins a long list of dissenters from the Oxford editors' orthodoxy, which includes critical work by Zachary Leader, Tim Chilcott, Roger Sales and Hugh Haughton, and editorial work by Kelsey Thornton in his Everyman edition, myself in two brief selections, and of course the many editors who worked on Clare manuscripts before the Oxford team's radical change of methodology in the 1960s. In short, this list of people argues for and/or enacts a policy which claims that it is fine for Clare's texts to be regularised and standardised to a degree. They usually affirm that: (a) there is evidence that Clare sought and valued a degree of editorial intervention; (b) to edit without

alteration makes him look eccentric and renders him inaccessible, which (c) adds further to the exclusion of Clare from the canon. For this group, editorial interference has never been a necessarily negative, invasive or patronising act. Here is an extract from the latest in this line, Bate, introducing his selection:

Clare indicated in a note to his publishers that he expected his editors to normalize his spelling ('l'm' for 'lm', 'used' for 'usd', etc.) and to introduce punctuation for the sake of clarity, but he did not want them to over-regularize his grammar or remove the regional dialect words that were so essential to his voice... [The] nine volumes of the Oxford University Press [published] between 1984 and 2003, [were] based rigorously on the original unpunctuated and erratically spelt manuscripts.

But, as I show in my biography of Clare, the poet positively wanted his friends and publishers to assist him in the preparation of his work for the press. The final wording of many lines was reached via a process of dialogue that is frequently recoverable from surviving correspondence... Clare was glad to be given advice, but did not always take it. Sometimes he acknowledged that his work was improved by his editors, whilst sometimes he stood by his own first thoughts.

As Clare used his critical self-judgement, so the modern editor should use critical judgement and analytical bibliography to decide on the status of the variations between manuscripts and printed texts—to distinguish between errors based on misreading of Clare's hand or misinterpretation of his sense, alterations that go against his spirit, and improvements of which he approved or is likely to have approved.

Bate's Clare spells 'erratically' and was 'glad to be given advice' by his friends, and so Bate puts himself in that same position, as a friend, as an advisor (as a patron?). Bate then adopts something more appropriate to an authorial position: 'As Clare used his critical self-judgement, so the modern editor should use critical judgement and analytical bibliography to decide...'. Here Bate claims to be doing

more than merely interpreting text: the position he asserts for his editing has untroubled similitude, through that simple bridging 'so', to Clare's own critical-creative position in relation to the original text. Indeed with that authoritative sounding 'critical bibliography' Bate might even be laying claim to Clare's authorial authority with the added benefit of serious, professionalised scholarly technique; Bate implies for himself an even *better* position than Clare could have had. If that were not enough to make us rely on the text he constructs, Bate then claims that his authoritative position means that any changes he makes will be unlikely to 'go against [Clare's] spirit'. Such talk of 'spirit' elevates an editorial methodology to a plane of easy communication with a long-dead poet, or at least evokes an 'essence of Clareness', known only to Bate. As Clare's biographer it is perhaps inevitable that in his supporting edition, Bate reconstructs Clare's 'spirit' as a guide for his editing. In case we hadn't quite got that point, the editor continues:

This anthology is accordingly the first substantial selection from Clare's entire oeuvre to be prepared according to the principles that the poet himself wished to be applied to his work: the errors and unapproved alterations of earlier editors are removed, but light punctuation is provided and spelling is regularized without diluting the dialect voice.

If Bate is right, if Clare's principles can be determined in such a clear fashion, and if, as he says in his biography, reading Clare's rejection of punctuation as a 'political gesture', is a 'mistaken modern assumption', then clearly the Oxford editors have got it all wrong, in point of fact, in point of fundamental principle. Bate returns us to an original principle of standard editing, printing and publishing practice, and in this sense, he is as much a fundamentalist as the Oxford team. We might even say that Bate's return to manuscripts to then edit with his own fundamental principles, is also a species of textual primitivism.

Editors have to make tough decisions when deciding on their methodology; thankfully readers and critics do not have to follow suit. But we should be alert to the legacy of editors' unavoidable limiting of textual options, and to the political propaganda they use to construct and defend their editions. The reductive propaganda sold by either side bears only a thin relation to the rich history of Clare's varying, developing, nuanced and contradictory considerations of the politics of language. The Oxford/Carcanet team's four decades of diligent lucubration leave Clare studies with an enviably solid platform. Bate was exactly the sort of high-profile, media-friendly, accessible populariser that Clare studies was desperate for. But their opposed legacies suggest that Clare's texts now deserve multiple and pluralist editorial methodologies. There is an exciting innovative world of editorial and technical possibilities yet to be tapped in the presentation of Clare's texts.

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Gillian Hughes, ed., *The Collected Letters of James Hogg, Volume 1, 1800–1819*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004. Pp. 490. £40.00. ISBN 0748616713.

Ian Duncan, ed., James Hogg, *Winter Evening Tales*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004. Pp. 600. £9.99. ISBN 0748620869.

Jill Rubenstein, ed., James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004. Pp. 129. £7.99. ISBN 0748520850.

For James Hogg, letter writing was inseparable from a life in letters. His earliest surviving correspondence, often with Walter Scott, concerns his attempts to become a published author, or include poems of his own or his collection, or criticise the poetry of others. One obvious reason for this is that many of Hogg's non-literary associates were also non-literate; he claimed in the Memoir of his

own life only ever to have had six months' formal education. Which makes it the more extraordinary that he should emerge from this first volume as such an accomplished correspondent. Take, for example, this letter of Christmas Eve 1803 (less than three years after the first letter included here) to Scott, in which a graceful apology sets the poet up as supplicant for the mercy of the man who was already becoming his patron, in an altogether more delicate affair (I follow the editor's decision not to interrupt the flow of Hogg's idiosyncratic spelling and grammar by the interpolation of [*sic*]):

I am afraid that I was at least half-seas over the last night I was with you for I cannot for my life remember what passed when it was late If I was in the state in which I suspect I was, I must have spoken a very great deal of nonsense for which I beg ten thousand pardons. I have the consolation however of remembering that Mrs Scott kept us company all or most of the time which she certainly would not have done had I been very rude....

You once promised me your best advice ... I am now going to ask it seriously in an affair in which I am sure we will both take as much pleasure it is this: I have lately taken it into my head to publish a copy of all my own songs which I can collect, but some of which I have lost entirely, and perhaps a few detached pieces of poetry to make somewhat of a volume.... Now although I will not proceed without your consent and advice, yet I would have you to understand that I expect it, as I have the scheme much at heart at present.

The matter, as Hogg well knew at this early stage, and would find repeatedly through the course of his long relationship of mutual fondness and mutual exasperation with Scott, needed careful negotiation. First, and incontrovertible, was the difference in status, education, and expectation between the Border shepherd and the well connected Edinburgh lawyer, Sheriff-Depute of Selkirkshire, soon-to-be famous poet and greatest literary lion of his age. (In another letter, Hogg invites Scott to visit him at home, makes it clear that he

could hardly expect such condescension, flatters them both by quoting Burns's 'humble cot an' hamely fare,' and concludes by saying that he would hardly know what to do with the great man should he appear.) Overtly, Hogg needed Scott much more than Scott needed him. Secondly, patronage – which is what Hogg sought from Scott, now, and repeatedly – put a strain on friendship. Then there was the tricky issue of Scott's assessment of the worthiness of Hogg's verse for collected publication; Hogg's poetic ambitions were great, even at this stage, and risking rebuff, he was also highly determined. Perhaps most sensitive of all, he was seeking to enlist the help of the man on whose territory he was about to encroach, transforming himself from loyal informant, supplier of verse and local lore to the editor of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), to poet and collector in his own rivalrous right.

In this compounded set of circumstances, each of which jeopardised the writer's standing in the response of his correspondent, Hogg invented a strategy which these letters show him adopting repeatedly through this volume: he got in first with the buffoonery and self-abasement, as a prelude to asserting the seriousness of his aims and claims. Eventually, in the Edinburgh years, the reputation of 'Hoggishness' would become institutionalised in *Blackwood's Noctes Ambrosianae*, to the point where Hogg was unable to control or to shake off the boorish persona. One of the many fascinating revelations of Gillian Hughes's edition is to reveal this persona in process of formation in Hogg's own correspondence. It is in fact, as the Editor's Introduction points out, to Scott's 'careful and unusual' retention of his incoming correspondence that many of the most substantial letters in this volume owe their survival. Not all of Scott's to Hogg do survive; nonetheless, this new volume opens the tantalising possibility of an interleaved mutual correspondence that would – to adopt J. G. Lockhart's assessment of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* – offer an abiding insight into the 'friendships of genius.' If Hogg needed Scott (and it is clear that he did), the admiration was mutual, and it was no less necessary to Scott's generosity and to his self-image, to act as the patron of a Scottish bard. Signing himself 'Your

faithfull Shepherd,' Hogg promoted himself, his friend, and a particularly Scots vision of camaraderie-in-letters that Scott himself would adopt in the verse epistles that structure *Marmion*. That minstrel might, variously, be personified in Burns, Hogg, Scott himself, and a host of lesser aspirants. Not all Hogg's letters to Scott are supplicatory, or grateful; damaged *amour propre*, invective, even imperiousness, come within his rhetorical range. Throughout, as Scott (and now the proximate reader) are reminded, Hogg's literary activities are enveloped in the daily toils of a working farmer and husbandman.

It's difficult to do justice to the richness of this long volume; to indicate something of its variety one might single out two further important groupings of letters: to women, in particular Hogg's future wife Margaret Phillips, and to Archibald Constable and William Blackwood, who became Hogg's main – though as the correspondence indicates edgily – by no means only publishers in the years covered here. Hogg is lightly flirtatious with Eliza Izett and Janet Stuart, trying out pastoral personae – 'I'll be a tinker or a ballad singer to attain your company.... do be so kind as to write a few lines to the Ettrick Shepherd' – and adopting towards Margaret a gallantry that though it draws from Sterne and from Burns's correspondence, has its own version of spontaneity and breathless passion:

Ah if I knew you were sitting at the window reading a book as I have often found you how delightful would my visit be—I would fly and clasp you in my arms—No—no I would not do that—I would not kiss you neither—you know I would not—no matter, I would think about all these things there is no offence in thinking—

Well into his forties, and far from physically prepossessing, Hogg's pen was his greatest asset in courtship.

He showed equal agility, even from the earliest days of his engagement with the Edinburgh literary milieu, in playing off one potential publisher against another, and in enlisting Byron, John Wilson, to forward his ambitions – all the while maintaining the view of his tales (as he wrote to Blackwood in 1817) as ‘simple carelessly and badly written’ effusions. On the basis of these letters, Gillian Hughes re-assesses Hogg’s contribution to the notorious *éclat* of *Blackwood’s*: these letters show him giving advice to the publisher on familiar terms, offering his support, and criticism, as well as an astute sense of his fellow-contributors. This mature, assured literary voice is not the hapless boor set adrift in a sophisticated world whose mores he cannot fathom; the *Collected Letters* should finally establish as mythical the uncouth figure so powerfully evoked in the *Noctes* by Lockhart and John Wilson (and on occasion Hogg himself), and until recently adopted by literary history as biographical fact. The persona of ‘The Ettrick Shepherd’ was Hogg’s greatest marketing asset (as, for a while, it was *Blackwood’s*), in an environment of romantic valorisation of the simple and the rustic. It would also become his millstone as a serious artist.

If these letters lack the sheer bravado and panache of Byron’s or the self-conscious versatility of Burns’s or the glorious word-power of Keats’s, they nonetheless have a complexity and cunning all of their own. Like these compeers, Hogg’s artistry is at its most poised at the moment of denial: ‘but for my blessing dear Mr Scott do not shew my letters to any body for when I write to a friend I just take what comes uppermost without any rule what ever’ What is astonishing is that a complete edition of this correspondence has not been available before. That one should even begin to assess Hogg’s letters in the company of the great Romantic epistolarists is an indication of the importance of Gillian Hughes’s first volume. There is much still to look forward to: Volume Two is shortly to appear, and will cover the intricacies and emotional gyrations of the *Blackwood’s* years. All Romanticists are indebted to the splendid Stirling-South Carolina Collected Edition (SSC).

'Highland Adventures' in *Winter Evening Tales* is cast in epistolary form; first published in 1811 as 'Malise's Journey to the Trossacks' in Hogg's journal *The Spy*, it carries an epigraph from Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (1810). In this poem, Malise is Roderick Dhu's henchman; in 1811, Hogg had reasons for presenting himself as Scott's literary sidekick, but this set of satiric sketches shows him to be a thoroughly independent observer of the vogue for Highland tourism in the wake of the poem's romantic portrayal. The voice of Burns comes to assist in disabusing reality, as the narrator insists on the part played by a powerful dram in creating the glamour of landscape. *Winter Evening Tales* was accepted, as a letter of August 1819 indicates, by Oliver and Boyd, 'for the sum of *One Hundred Pounds Sterling*.' Ian Duncan's new edition (now available in paperback) was widely acclaimed when it appeared in hardback in 2004; the decision to reprint at a student-friendly price selected SSC volumes is very welcome, and offers the possibility of putting some major but previously scarcely known Romantic texts on the course syllabus. *WET*, as Duncan's exemplary Introduction makes clear, is a case in point. Its publication in 1820 offered, as he puts it 'a vibrant demotic alternative to the culturally and commercially dominant form of the historical novel' established by Scott in *Waverley* (1814) and its successors. Duncan emphasises the experimental functional and stylistic hybridity of these collected tales, and indeed *WET* offers an astonishing variety of voices and subjects. Small regional variations are registered in the rendition of spoken accent, and even ostensibly 'standard' English narratives are differently inflected. Indeed, Hogg's virtuosity as a writer of prose has not received its due; his control over the difficult tonal mode (aptly described by Duncan as a Defoe-esque 'anti-heroic picaresque') produces extraordinary rhythms which demand to be read aloud.

As this edition is able for the first time to demonstrate, Hogg took care in preparing his mss for publication and in revising for different audiences or in different formats. Many of these tales, then, are twice- or thrice-told – through earlier journal publication, in Hogg's own previous collections, or as belonging to

a folk mode; some, like ‘John Gray o’ Middleholm,’ use a formula of repetition (‘there may be here that ken, an’ here that dinna ken; but that’s a very queer story’) to involve their audience, and keep it at a distance from the exposition of mysterious events. The collection is full of unexpected delights: a wonderful comic conversation overheard between Hogg’s mother and a servant girl suspected by the community of assisting at a meeting to raise the devil; the Peacockian minister Dr Leadbetter in ‘Welldean Hall,’ who reasons concerning an apparition that ‘immaterial substances might be imaged forth by the workings of a fancy overheated and bedimmed in its mental vision until its optics were over-run with opacity;’ the sly play of the author’s giving himself an appearance in someone else’s story (a device Hogg would use four years later to more enigmatic purpose in the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*). This is a complex world, whose many planes of perception readily accommodate Border shepherds, superior collegians, wise women, wraiths, apparitions and possessed animals. Superstition and devout Christian belief co-exist; ballad metres, fast-paced dialogue and Johnsonian sententiae all find a place in narratives that never fail to hold attention. *WET* was popular in America, with new editions and republications appearing in New York, Philadelphia and Hartford within a few years. Poe’s interest in Hogg’s work has received some attention, mainly through the *Blackwood’s* connection; it is becoming possible to set these in a more extensive context: readers of *WET* will hear echoes through the work of Melville, Hawthorne and even Sarah Orne Jewett. A reference to a hungry Duncan Campbell buying three penny rolls (eating one, saving one and giving the third away) in a strange town set me wondering whether Hogg might have been familiar with Franklin’s *Autobiography*; reference or not, Duncan makes good in ways that cast interesting light on the great self-fashioner.

If Boswell’s Johnson was an episode in the ‘friendships of genius,’ Hogg’s *Anecdotes of Scott* (also in paperback) reveals itself to be nothing less. It confirms the pleasures and the tensions of their relationship in an unusual kind of biography which is equally – in the editor Jill Rubenstein’s terms – ‘part

autobiography, part memoir, and part apologia.' Again, Hogg's generic and stylistic inventiveness are at work like a series of refracting mirrors in the mix of role-playing, self-justification, self-deprecation, astute perceptiveness and sceptical critique which constitute his story of Scott's life. This is a Romantic biography more teasing, more fragmented and multivocal (if considerably shorter), in many ways more intimate, and less respectful than Lockhart's. The two versions of the work are both reproduced here; again, the Introduction is excellent, and the editorial apparatus clear and helpful. Hogg's representation of the interaction of egos and vanities produces comic vignettes in the service of sophisticated dialogic representation of a nineteenth-century version of Boswell's (*pace* Lockhart) 'curious chapter in the history of the human mind.' There was something audacious in the idea, as early reviewers were not slow to point out, of a common shepherd aspiring to join the ranks of biographers; the *Anecdotes* accedes genially to this, according Lockhart undisputed right as 'authorised' memorialist, and construing Hogg's portrait in the idiosyncratic realm of anecdote and self-projection. The status difference so carefully negotiated in the Letters is here inscribed in the dramatised exchanges between subject and interlocutor: Scott's anglicised standard idiom is trumped by broad Border dialect; natural wit and sagacity triumphs over birth and education. A new psychologising of the Shepherd's point of view adds a further dimension to the represented relationship: Hogg's Scott has no inner life; here Hogg's Hogg has the advantage of him, establishing an intimate relation with the reader through strategically shared introspective reflections on events. For all that, there is an immense affection, and pathos in the final pages; as Scott approaches death precipitated, apparently, by 'the Whig ascendancy in the British cabinet,' 'Hogg' attempts to cheer him up: 'I wanted to make him laugh but I could not even make him smile.'

On the evidence of these three volumes, Hogg is a writer of enormous versatility, ambitiousness and literary accomplishment whose work ought to feature on every Romantic syllabus. The editors of SSC are making this possible

for the first time; Romanticists should seize the opportunity and clamour for more of this compelling oeuvre to be made available in paperback.

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