

Reviews

Charles Watkins and Ben Cowell, eds, *The Sixty-Eighth Volume of the Walpole Society 2006. Letters of Uvedale Price.* Leeds and Cambridge MA: Maney Publishing for the Walpole Society, 2006. Pp. 359. £29.50. ISSN 01410016.

Charles Watkins and Ben Cowell have produced a superb edition of the correspondence of one of the most important and neglected of the theorists and practitioners of the picturesque. Uvedale Price has received less attention from literary critics than William Gilpin and Humphry Repton because he was less mobile. Whereas they travelled, framing such famous tourist locations as the Wye valley and the Lake District through the aesthetics of the picturesque (in Gilpin's case) and, in Repton's, laying out the grounds of scores of gentlemen, Uvedale Price designed his picturesque landscape in his native Herefordshire (Foxley). For this reason, he was less fashionable at the time: not for Price the topical reference in *Mansfield Park* or the backhanded tribute of satire in *Dr Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*. This comparative neglect has been unfortunate, but the advent of this edition should bring it to an end. In an introduction that constitutes the most sustained piece of original research yet published on Price, the editors amply demonstrate his importance to late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century aesthetics while also reconfiguring our understanding of the picturesque in general, both as aesthetic theory and as social practice. Harnessing their experience as cultural geographers as well as art historians, Watkins and Cowell show that the key to the picturesque was affiliation to the social habits and status of the country Whig gentry. Price and his fellow

picturesque theorist Payne Knight were fellow Whigs and also friends and Herefordshire neighbours. Their new aesthetic was a conscious expression of the practice of their Whig landowning forebears—a remodelling of the landscape that visibly demonstrated not just ownership but a tradition of paternalist care for the nature they owned and the farmers and labourers under their 'protection', that is, those who rented land from them or worked as labourers on their estates. The picturesque landscape expressed on the ground the fantasy of the landowner's independence of base pecuniary motives: it showed that he did not wish to cultivate every inch of land for cash, thus rejecting the more naked forms of capitalist improvement that many Whigs held responsible for exploiting the poor. At the same time, Price was a canny re-organiser of his estates so as to bring a more continuous tract within his economic control.

What emerges most clearly from the introduction and indeed the letters themselves is the extent to which Price's landscape-vision was based on a practice he shared with a class of gentlemen for whom the inheritance of land, and the political power that came with land, was a birthright. One of Price's closest friends was the Whig leader Charles James Fox. As young men, the two made the Grand Tour together; they shared the same political attitudes and the literary and artistic tastes that accompanied those attitudes. Price sent Fox seeds and plenty of planting advice; they chatted about pastoral poetry and classical Greek pronunciation. They visited each other's country houses. They were social equals, as were Price's fellow picturesque theorists Payne Knight and Sir George Beaumont (Wordsworth's patron). The picturesque was, it emerges, the shared taste of a nexus of Whig gentry, expressed on paper in theoretical terms as a reaction to two contrasting threats to the formerly-implicit ideology of a class—a labouring-class revolution on the one hand, a more nakedly profit-driven exploitation on the other. To such men, architects like Nash and landscape-gardeners like Repton were mere tradesmen, their ideas suspect (however useful their services) because tainted by their need to promote themselves for hire. Price thought a

Repton a 'coxcomb' for calling himself a 'landscape-gardener' and theorising about his work: to the Whig squire Repton was a contractor for hire, a mere layer-out of grounds.

Such attitudes explain much about Romantic poetry. Wordsworth presented *Lyrical Ballads* to Fox; Robert Bloomfield did likewise with his pastoral poem *The Farmer's Boy*. Coleridge, meanwhile, wrote an obsequious article about Fox in the newspaper. At the start of their careers, then, these poets saw their rural poetry as an expression of ideas and as a genre likely to appeal to the Whig gentry who opposed Pitt's repressive government and claimed, paternalistically, to represent 'the people'. Wordsworth's later friendship with another of Price's friends, the Essex landowner and painter Sir George Beaumont, and the conservative rural vision of *The Excursion* was no *volte-face*, but a continuation of a self-identification with the values and tastes of the landowning gentry already underway by 1800. Wordsworth never fully admired Price however, despite visiting Price's Foxley estate when his brother-in-law took a farm on the Herefordshire-Radnorshire border. To Wordsworth, Price was too much of a glutton, both at table and in the way he subjected all his estates to his own taste. Everything smacked of Price's own designing hand: to Wordsworth, Foxley was a semi-despotic landscape, even if the despotism was benevolent, because the variety produced by other people's preferences and activities had been eliminated. It lacked humanity.

Price was no cutting-edge intellectual: there are unwittingly amusing letters written as he grappled unavailingly with German philosophy. There are telling failures to understand Knight's critique of his Burkean associations. But he was a man of geniality and goodwill: quarrels with the querulous Knight were never allowed to destroy their friendship; he was generous in his hospitality and willing to be advised about his writing. His letters, made accessible by Watkins's and Cowell's meticulous editing, reveal in detail how the landed gentry which Austen's novels portray lived, thought, wrote and gardened. And they cast new light on Romanticism by showing the sheer social/political power of that gentry, a power to

which the poets of the 1790s could not help but appeal and from which those of the 1810s—most notably Shelley and Byron—could not escape.

Tim Fulford
Nottingham Trent University

F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke. Volume II: 1784-1797*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. Pp. 605. £90. ISBN 0998206798.

Burke's crusades against Hastings and Jacobinism give thematic unity to the second volume of F.P. Lock's monumental biography and involve a full exposition of his political philosophy. Lock gives us overviews of British involvement in India, the historical status of impeachment, Irish policy and, of course, the response to the French Revolution. His day-by-day account of the seven-year impeachment of Hastings follows every twist in the defence's disputes over evidence as it imposed legal restraints that Burke hoped to circumvent by a more inquisitorial process. He pays much attention to the political prints that amplified Burke's rhetorical tropes and often played a part in Burke's conflicts with his colleagues. Above all, he has immersed himself in the manuscripts, editions and variants of Burke's writings to chart the development of his views. Writers less versed in recent research would do well to consult the volume in order to avoid long-standing errors and misrepresentations (including the ubiquitous misquotation of Burke's biblical phrase '*a swinish multitude*').

'A biography is the least polemical form that the study of Burke can take,' Lock states, and a respectful (even polemical) defence of Burke's ideas does not inhibit a full account of his faults. Self-righteous, endlessly self-justifying and constitutionally averse to compromise, Burke's 'volcanic' passions found political objects that were elaborated in personal nightmares. These, when not based on fact, were weakening illusions in Lock's view rather than the compelling imaginative visions others have hailed. After the defeat of Fox's India Bill (largely his own) had brought down the

Fox/North coalition, the 'Bengal squad' replaced the 'king's friends' as his main bugbear, the corrupting force in British politics. If he did create this 'chimera' and equally imaginary threats such as Fox's infection of the Whig party with Jacobinism, they were fears that threatened valuable ideals and principles to which he gave masterly expression. Burke cast Hastings as his own antitype, arbitrary and avaricious, when he seized on an unlucky defence assertion that India was used to arbitrary government (a common idea, but not shared by Hastings himself). He did not charge Hastings with 'Oriental despotism' but with subverting native institutions of universal validity.

Lock's Burke is less the champion of the 'little platoon' than a universalist, natural law thinker. Indeed, he claims that Burke's conception of the 'real' rights of man guaranteed by law rather than democratic participation anticipate modern ideas of an internationalist 'minimum.' What law meant to Burke as a legislator is, however, not very clear, especially as his impeachment practice was to dispense with 'legality' in pursuit of a higher justice. It is more the 'law of God' or 'nature' that lay behind all civilizations. Before the full impact of the industrial revolution Burke could follow contemporary scholarship in treating India as a civilization equivalent to Europe, the reverse of the 'Orientalist' approach. Under different dispensations of Providence, each state might have its own laws, traditions and state religion, yet there is an underlying unity of spirit just as there is a unity of form, hierarchy based on property and heredity. Particular principles adopted into a Constitution matter less than the potential of a whole national history to yield principled responses to contemporary problems when correctly interpreted. Burke's habitual remedy for political ills, as Lock somewhat reductively remarks, is 'put men of virtue in charge, and leave the problem in their hands.'

Lock persistently calls his idea of the state benign and paternalist though he has to admit it offers the poor nothing more than Malthus except charity and the hopes of 'trickle-down' economics. Lock gives little context for Burke's complaint that modern governments tried to govern too much. This interference with nature

and 'private' matters certainly included poor laws but presumably all other attempts at humane regulation. Burke even shows ambivalence towards slavery: 'Slavery is contrary to nature. True, but you would not instantly manumit all slaves. Property is to be secured.' Extensions of regulation into the private sphere gave strength to that demand for political rights to safeguard civil liberties that Burke opposed. Burke himself supported John Reeves and wanted the government to wage a 'war of opinion.'

The conservative sensibility that welcomed Burke's anti-revolutionary writings is well described but overstated in its extent. Burke's appeals to chivalric feelings and practices were 'neither absurd, nor nostalgic, nor anachronistic' but 'grounded on a detailed, empirical knowledge of the realities of eighteenth-century life.' Lock enrols Mary Wollstonecraft in the universal outrage at the attack on the Marie Antoinette, though she felt for her as a woman whereas Burke defended what his friend Philip Francis called his 'pure foppery' by appealing to feelings for majesty. Lock buttresses Burke's claim to speak for a majority, though that majority is subtly qualified. It is a majority of 'his intended audience' and 'the Establishment'; *Reflections* gained early 'general approval' in 'many quarters.' Lock defends Burke's use of facts, even opinions voiced in debates rather than resolutions of the National Assembly, and deals with his critics mostly in terms of their accuracy and engagement with Burke's arguments. Their own social visions are not allowed to compete with Burke's or represent any substantial or coherent opposition beyond the pressure group of Dissent and the 'incipient populism' that embraced Paine. The Association of the Friends of the People is mentioned twice, the Constitutional Society and London Corresponding Society not at all.

Burke's famous concession that if the minds of men were being drawn towards any great change his opposition would be 'perverse and obstinate' is considered a rhetorical gesture. He could rely on his audience rejecting such an idea. Burke's own writings, however, show some awareness of the expanding public sphere that threatens this confidence in his 'virtual representation.' He

maintained that all that constituted the real French nation was in exile, but seemed to acknowledge a wider political public in Britain. His estimate of the political nation as 400,000 originally included nearly 20,000 women. Lock calculates that this public reached down to £50-a-year artisans and shopkeepers, yet admits that Burke primarily valued the opinions of the landed gentry and deprecated Fox's cultivation of the Westminster electorate.

This underestimation of opposition, while endorsing Burke's claims, could detract from his heroism. In growing isolation, even from friends who shared but dared not avow his opinions, and perpetually forced into the stance of injured or embattled virtue, his burning sense of the universal importance of his cause sustained a resilient mental combativeness that made him one of the greatest of political controversialists.

Chris Jones
University of Bangor

Dale Townshend, *The Orders of the Gothic: Foucault, Lacan and the Subject of Gothic Writing, 1764-1820*. New York: AMS Press, 2007. Pp. 365. \$87.50. ISBN 9780404648541.

Max Fincher, *Queering the Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp. 216. £47.00. ISBN 9780230003477.

Two critical paradigms have proved central to the development of Gothic studies in the last three decades: Foucauldian New Historicism and psychoanalysis. *Orders of the Gothic* and *Queering the Gothic* are two works that offer timely re-evaluations of these methodologies, presenting in different ways fresh possibilities for theorising and historicising the Gothic's uneasy relation to modernity.

Townshend's approach is Foucauldian and Lacanian, but this entails no easy synthesis of New Historicism and psychoanalysis. Whilst he acknowledges the strengths of the Foucauldian

paradigm in conceptualising the historical relation of the Gothic to modernity, he also observes that what Foucault's 'neat discursive turns' fail to register is the true *horror* of the Gothic. It is Lacan in creative tension with Foucault that enables Townshend to interrogate the uncanny excesses of the modern orders of the Gothic.

The work initiates a complex interweaving of Gothicism, New Historicism and Lacanian psychoanalysis which Townshend figures in terms of the 'Borromean Knot'. This is more than a 'neat' rhetorical gesture: the symbol derives from the coat of arms of the fifteenth-century Borromeo family and thus evokes notions of paternal lineage and inheritance central to Gothicism. Also the figure aptly conceptualises the work's theoretical imperative: to set in place strategic inter-sections between the orders of Foucault, Lacan and the Gothic, whilst at the same maintaining that points of suture are also necessarily points of rupture. The project begins with an account, through Foucault, of the discursive formation of a conflicted modern subject – the 'subject' of the Gothic – simultaneously within the domains of transcendence and empirical, historical reasoning. This 'Gothic' subject is Foucault's 'strange empirico-transcendental doublet', a subject radically split between 'the cogito and the order of the unthought'. It is Foucault's notion of the 'unthought' that allows here for a highly productive, thoroughly historicized 'knotting' together of New Historicism, psychoanalysis and the Gothic which ultimately affirms the priority of Lacan in terms of theorising the early Gothic's own uneasy knotting together of the transcendental and the empirical.

Chapters two and three draw Foucault into further productive relations with Lacan and Žižek. Foucault's distinction between 'sexuality' and 'alliance' is re-positioned theoretically through Lacan and Žižek's account of the paternal metaphor and the symbolic systems through which 'blood' functions to establish and redistribute claims to paternal power. Chapter two offers a multi-faceted reading of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in which economies of blood and paternity are related to the juridico-

political significance of an emerging national 'gothic' genealogy. This analysis in turn is convincingly and innovatively deployed to interrogate Horace Walpole's response to what he regarded as increasingly derogatory and malicious contemporary appraisals of Robert Walpole's political career: Walpole employs a very 'Gothic' model of conflicted filial and political loyalties – Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – in order to re-figure his father's adversaries as the treacherous 'murderers' of the reputation of a tender father and honest politician. Townshend adroitly defends his analysis here from the anticipated Barthean charge that such a reading re-asserts the authority of the paternal function over the text. Rather, what it reveals is the discursive significance, within a broad range of contexts (which include the filial/political relationship of Horace Walpole to his father), of paternal mythologies that participate in the shift from 'alliance' to 'sexuality' – from dynastic paternity to sentimental fatherhood.

The middle chapters shift emphasis slightly to examine Gothic narratives of forbidden, perverse enjoyment. Chapter five, beginning with William Beckford's *Vathek*, explores the phantasms of 'stolen enjoyment' through which this and other Gothic fictions articulate notions of an obscene, racially 'othered' *jouissance* that is simultaneously the perverse Other to and the necessary supplement of an emerging Western order of properly sanctioned pleasure. More than anywhere else in the work, Lacan emerges here *against* Foucault as the theorist whose work provides the best critical paradigm for interrogating the orders of the Gothic. Gothic fictions cut across morally, aesthetically and economically authorised discourses of pleasures (most notably, the discourse of the sublime), reproducing yet distorting and perverting the conditions under which 'pleasure' can legitimately take place within an emerging capitalist modernity.

Chapters six and seven present superbly theorised readings of Radcliffe, Godwin and Charlotte Dacre. These chapters alone would suffice to recommend this work to any serious critic of early Gothic. The argument addresses what appear to be more 'Foucauldian' aspects of Gothicism, but still Townshend demonstrates the

extent to which Foucauldian analyses of discipline, torture, subjectivity and spectacle leave a 'remainder' that demands a Lacanian intervention. The treatment here of torture and the economy of the gaze convincingly completes the author's case for a 'knotting together' of Lacan and Foucault in Gothic criticism. Gothic fictions attest to a subtle re-situation of torture within 'an interior subjective locale' that complicates the Foucauldian notion of a decisive shift away from pre-modern regimes of torture towards modern regimes of discipline. Gothic fictions are shown here to figure torture *precisely as* the essential 'remainder' that traumatically grounds the subject in the modern order of law: torture is 'modernity's object petit a.'

Townshend's work delivers on its promises, entirely justifying the author's initial argument in favour of a subtle suturing of Foucault, Lacan and the orders of the Gothic. Moreover, it exposes the intimate, paradoxical implication of the Gothic in a modern symbolic order stained by a perverse enjoyment that often escapes, as it were, the New Historicist critical gaze. Foucault needs a Lacanian supplement and this work provides that, and more: it offers some of the richest and most nuanced theoretical and historical readings of early Gothic fiction in recent years.

Though less theoretically ambitious, Fincher's *Queering the Gothic in the Romantic Age* usefully extends contemporary theorisations of Queerness in Gothic studies so as to position the concept within a network of discourses that have not thus far been related directly to the 'othering' of same-sex desire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter one considers various biographies of three eighteenth-century Gothicists whose works and lives have often been interpreted in terms of assumptions pertaining to their sexuality: Walpole, Beckford and Lewis. Fincher shows here how these biographies imitate a distinctly 'Gothic' mode of writing in their treatment of sexual identity. They assume the presence of a 'secret' that is deemed to have decisive explanatory power in relation to these men's lives and works; they seek to 'unveil' this secret so as to expose the 'reality' beneath an ambiguous surface of

inconclusive but highly suggestive signifiers. Fincher's interrogation of such 'Gothic' biography provides a firm basis for his reading of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in chapter two. The secrets, rumours and sexual suspicions that circle around Manfred and Theodore in this text are set alongside instances of attempted sexual blackmail in the eighteenth century and this contextualisation of *Otranto* opens up a fresh reading of Manfred's 'secret' - his dread of the mysterious, effeminate, 'peasant' Theodore and his desperate attempts to protect himself from any insinuation of inauthentic or impotent bloodline. An equally productive historicisation of the male Gothic is evident in chapter three. Fincher draws attention to the complex publishing history of Beckford's *Vathek*. Published in French in 1787, the text first appeared in English as a pirated version of the authorised translation by Samuel Henley. This complex history of textual shifts and misappropriations worked to uncouple the text from a clearly identifiable, stable authorial origin and Fincher deploys an expanded notion of 'translation' here to interrogate the shifts and misappropriations of sexual identities and desires in *Vathek*. Queering *Vathek* entails a recognition of the extent to which this text uncouples sexuality and textuality from stable, fixed origins; it is also a matter, though, of appreciating *Vathek's* complicity in the voyeuristic enjoyment of the sufferings and sacrifices of other(ed) bodies. Fincher remains alive to the misogynistic and homophobic orders of power that continue to work in and through Gothicism, however much they might be warped and disrupted by aspects of the Gothic's Queer textuality.

Chapters four, five and six read Lewis, Godwin, Byron and John Polidori through three of Fincher's key signifying phenomena - the gaze, secrecy and cross-dressing. Gothic subjects in works such as *The Monk*, *Caleb Williams*, *Manfred* and *The Vampyre* pass in and out of regular and irregular subject positions and in certain instances become the instigators and recipients of vigilant, disciplinary gazes that are nevertheless 'queered', Fincher argues, by their ambivalent deployment alongside silent, stolen glances of desire and secret understanding.

Whilst Fincher's argument is at times a little forced and not always original (the gendered dynamic of the Sublime is mapped a little too complacently on to the relationship between Falkland and Caleb, for example), these readings nevertheless prioritise, importantly for Gothic criticism, the dire potential for exploitation, extortion and violence that accompanied the public's highly 'Gothic' interest in the 'secret' desires of men.

In conclusion, Fincher's study is imaginative, bold and historically well-grounded overall. It suffers from some theoretical generalisations and simplifications, however. In terms, for example, of Gothic representations of 'othered' identities that Fincher wants to conceptualise as 'Queer', the explanatory power of notions of performativity (through Butler) and monstrosity (through Halberstam) needs to be evidenced and not simply taken as read. Nevertheless, in terms of its insightful new contextualisations of early male Gothic texts, this work is worth reading. It makes a timely and thoughtful contribution to Gothic, Romantic and Queer studies.

Sue Chaplin
Leeds Metropolitan University

Philip Shaw, *The Sublime*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. 168. Pb.: £11.99. ISBN 0415268486.

The sublime, with its long historical pedigree and its contemporary theoretical relevance, would seem to be a perfect choice for Routledge's New Critical Idiom series—a series which purports to offer a guide to 'today's critical terminology,' in the form of 'an original and distinctive overview' that also argues its relevance to a broader field of cultural representations. And yet, of the many terms Routledge has tackled, the sublime must be the most elusive, challenging as it does the very grounds of definition, and indicating things that lie insistently beyond our grasp. As if this were not enough, the sublime abuts a number of adjacent or cognate concepts (astonishment, wonder, the mystical, and elements of the uncanny) that are similarly caught up in the

ineffable, and it is profoundly marked by national as well as historical differences that are by no means easy to account for.

Philip Shaw has done a deft and admirable job, however, in conveying the career of the sublime, as a term and a concept, from Antiquity to Žižek. None of the nuance and complication that mark its historical variety and cultural impact is sacrificed in the process of constructing an overarching narrative, even if some of it must inevitably be left out. Shaw begins, as one must, with the aesthetic treatise popularly ascribed to Longinus. Accounts of the sublime generally distinguish between the rhetorical basis and focus of the Longinian sublime, and interest in the natural, and subjective, sublime that came to preoccupy theorists in the eighteenth century. But while other recent writers on the sublime, such as James Kirwan (*Sublimity*, 2005), go so far as to cut out Longinus as not sufficiently related to the aesthetic discourse of the sublime that followed later, Shaw's account points out how concerns of later theorists are implicit, if unstated, in Longinus. More importantly perhaps, Shaw's account of later work on the sublime carries forward the implications of the discursive basis of the sublime articulated by Longinus.

In other earlier sections of the book, Shaw maps the key issues addressed by theorists of the sublime in the eighteenth century. This extensive body of work is related to evolving ideas about nature, language, and the divine—in the context of religious discourse, in relation to classicism, and more generally to poetics, though this is a discussion that could no doubt have been extended. The core chapters on Kant and Burke develop Shaw's overall strategy of combining exposition with a consideration of how key texts on the sublime relate to larger philosophical preoccupations. Kant's *Third Critique* is thus situated in terms of his work on 'pure' and 'practical' reason, and an account of the contribution of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* to the growing body of work on the sublime in the eighteenth century, emphasizing his exploration of the psychological (and indeed negative) aspects of sublime experience, leads to a reading of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that addresses the political and historical

implications of the sublime. The question of gender in Burke's theory is astutely handled, and carried forward into a subsequent chapter addressing the development of German Idealist philosophy and its impact on British Romantic writers. Throughout, Shaw also offers tactical and tactful discussions of the most influential re-readings of these major texts—from de Man's critique of Kant, to Furniss's readings of Burke, to de Bolla, Weiskel and Ferguson's extensive discussions of the Romantic sublime. Accounts of Coleridge's work on the sublime, of Wordsworth's famous *Prelude* encounter with the imagination, and of the response of women writers to these 'Oedipal' scenes of conflict, are nuanced and clear.

The dynamic of (imaginative) blockage and (rational) release central to the Kantian sublime has underwritten recent psychoanalytic as well as poststructuralist approaches, while its linguistic or discursive basis, the expressive uncertainty found in Burke, has remained central to post-Romantic explorations of the sublime. Indeed, much of the recent theoretical interest in the sublime, such as that of Derrida and Lyotard, involves a radicalisation of Kant's central arguments: emphasizing the importance of the unrepresentable, and the resistance of the sublime to resolution, the sublime becomes a figure for resistance, in historical and political terms. Size, with a nod to Lacan, rereads Kant via Hegel and finds in the sublime not that 'transcendent "Thing-in-itself" beyond the field of representation,' but rather 'an indicator of the traumatic emptiness, the primordial lack, residing at the heart of all forms of symbolization'. Not just an effect of signification, the sublime is 'an effect of appearances,' operative at the very limits of art and of thought.

Shaw's negotiation of contemporary theoretical engagements with the sublime is as thorough and accessible as his attention to more historical issues. Yet if the sublime is an elusive subject for critical analysis, the problem of concluding such an analysis is surely acute. Shaw closes with a turn toward the reconsideration of beauty, and with Jean-Luc Nancy's reflections on the sublime as always (endlessly, one might say)

fashionable—fashionable because it is always concerned with ‘a break within or from aesthetics.’ In this way, the sublime may be understood as a form of self-provocation: ‘enough beauty already, we must be sublime!’. Whether we will ever have enough of the sublime, however, remains to be seen.

Sophie Thomas
University of Sussex

Markus Poetzsch, “*Visionary Dreariness*”: Readings in Romanticism’s Quotidian Sublime. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. 226. £50. ISBN 0415978963.

Markus Poetzsch’s *Visionary Dreariness* is a welcome addition to a growing body of recent scholarship exploring the manifold valences of the sublime in Romantic-era literature. His aim is avowedly revisionist, challenging what he describes as the dominant critical narrative begun by Burke and Kant and more lately expressed by M.H. Abrams and Thomas Weiskel in which the sublime – and perhaps even ‘Romanticism’ itself – is necessarily equated with moments of mountaintop transcendence. Poetzsch argues both that this traditional categorization has tended to obliterate our attention to numerous Romantic texts depicting ‘everyday’ or ‘familiar’ sublimity, and that its association with egocentric masculinity has tended, directly and indirectly, to reinforce an unhelpful binary in the critical literature, whereby texts are valued by their links to the masculine or the feminine.

While he believes that by the dawn of the Romantic era sublime ‘experiences and expressions’ were being formulated in increasingly diverse ways, Poetzsch is at pains to note that sublimity is not ‘unique[ly]’ connected to Romanticism. Indeed, he says, the sublime is a phenomenon that is inherently difficult to fix, emerging, as it does, from moments of excess; it ‘attests to what cannot be properly contained or reconciled’. In thus calling for a requisite ‘flexibility’ in interpretive

models, Poetzsch turns to ‘a sublime of small familiar spaces and common natural objects, a sublime of quotidian experiences and consolations drawn from meanest flowers’. In so doing, Poetzsch enlists a range of theorists, most prominently Gaston Bachelard (on conceptions of domestic space) and Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau (on the creative potentiality of commonplace activities including walking), as he advances the idea that ‘the quotidian sublime is typically conducive to feelings of comfort, connection, solace, and joy’.

Poetzsch pursues this through the ‘readings’ promised in his subtitle, and he is especially interested in texts by female and labouring-class poets, including Burns, Baillie, Barbauld, Clare, and Dorothy Wordsworth, several of whom are featured in a chapter titled ‘Particularity and “Intimate Immensity”’. These figures are shown as having an eye for minute details, including the marvels of engineering performed by birds, animals, and insects; this eye for the particular is contrasted with the aesthetic emphasis on generality of form as advanced by Sir Joshua Reynolds. While the argument here is not groundbreaking, recalling a body of commentary on Clare and Dorothy Wordsworth, the readings are thoughtful and undergird Poetzsch’s contention that scholars of Romanticism are well-served by bringing familiar and unfamiliar texts into dialogue with one another.

Accordingly, Coleridge and William Wordsworth (and to a lesser extent Keats, De Quincey, and Hazlitt) are also major presences in the volume. Coleridge’s 1802 notebook entry on his climb of Scafell is put to good effect in the chapter ‘Romantic Descents’, and ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’ is made central to the chapter ‘Sublime Transport and the Making of Space’, where Poetzsch describes the poem as ‘epitomiz[ing] the unexpected plenitude and consoling wondrousness of everyday life’. ‘For Romantic writers of the everyday’, Poetzsch says, ‘the recovery of place is . . . coincident with a recovery of self’, and he presents the poem as especially effective at ‘elucidat[ing] the subtle interrelationship between recollected place, self, and community’. As the book’s title indicates, William Wordsworth is, in many ways, Exhibit A in Poetzsch’s program; he seeks

to show that even as Wordsworth has been made the standard-bearer for mountaintop sublimity, his poetry articulates a complex, kinetic, and sometimes frustrated relationship between the elevated and the humble. Of Poetzsch's various readings of both lyric and epic Wordsworth, his focused accounts of 'To a Butterfly' and 'An Evening Walk' are arguably the most fruitful for his larger thesis.

Throughout the book Poetzsch evinces a strong humanist sensibility, arguing that the critical tendency to overlook the wondrousness of ordinary life – or even to sneer at the idea of its possibility – is evidence of a kind of fashionable critical exhaustion, symptomatic of the pretension that we have somehow advanced beyond the simple joys that so enthralled our predecessors. In concluding, Poetzsch argues passionately that our own ongoing attempts to remove the film of perceptual familiarity are important both for the formation of an ethical consciousness and, more basically, for psychic solace. What remains an open question is whether the representational patterns Poetzsch identifies are, after all, best placed under the rubric of the sublime. Sometimes, as when he is describing the sublime entailments of memory, or walking, or domestic tranquillity, one wonders if sublimity is necessary as a hermeneutical layer, or if he is really just talking about the pleasures of memory, or walking, or domestic tranquillity. But Poetzsch is aware of the problem, implicitly suggesting that, as students and readers of Romanticism, we are all a bit like Wordsworth in the Alps, finding it difficult to relinquish consideration of those texts that still point to the clouds.

Scott McEathron
Southern Illinois University

Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Pp. 244. £45. ISBN 1403999929.

This original and stimulating new study addresses the topic of literary tourism – that is to say, the practice of visiting places closely associated with a given author, or with their fictions or poetry. This is a pastime that has flourished since the eighteenth century, and that today generates millions in revenue for the travel and heritage industries; yet as the author notes, this is the first full-length treatment of the phenomenon. Its previous near-invisibility to literary scholarship, Nicola Watson suggests, is in part a reflection of the disdain or condescension with which professional critics often regard such tourists. For most of the last century, the prevailing wisdom in academic circles has been that a reader's business is properly with the literary text itself, and with the text alone. Any need or desire to supplement or authenticate the text by reference to some externally verifiable reality has usually been viewed as woefully naïve and simplistic. Yet many readers clearly feel this need, and simply to dismiss their activities out of hand, Watson argues forcefully, is to neglect a significant element in the reception of many literary texts. 'To attend to the literary pilgrimage,' she contends, 'is to begin to construct a materialist history of amateur reading pleasures that continue to be available to this day'. And it is not just to the cultural history of reading, one should add, that this volume makes a useful contribution. Wide-ranging and rich in insights, this study also opens up fascinating new perspectives on questions of canon-formation, the construction of national cultures in England and Scotland, and much else besides.

The earliest literary tourism, it seems, took the form of visits to the graves of famous writers, or to other sites and monuments memorialising their death. Such 'necro-tourism' has a long history – St Paul is supposed to have wept at the grave of Virgil – but it really began to grow in popularity, in Britain at least, in the eighteenth

century. This is the starting point for Watson's study, which opens with a chapter that looks in turn at Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, Thomas Gray's tomb in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and finally the graves of Shelley and Keats in the Protestant cemetery outside Rome, and the museum dedicated to the two poets in the city centre. By the end of the century, however, touristic interest had expanded to take in both the birthplaces of authors, and also the homes in which they lived and worked. These two types of destination accordingly provide the focus for Watson's second and third chapters, which discuss respectively the processes by which Stratford and Alloway began to be marketed as the birthplaces of Shakespeare and Burns, and the development of Abbotsford and Haworth as museums/shrines to Scott and the Brontës.

In the final two chapters, Watson's attention shifts to touristic practices and itineraries that seek out sites famously depicted in poems and novels (as opposed to sites connected with the lives of authors). A hugely influential text in this regard was Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), which marked a watershed in fiction in the prominence it gave to real-life, easily identifiable landscapes. Rousseau's novel impelled many travellers to seek out the scenes he had described amidst the Swiss lakes; one such tourist was Byron, who memorably described his own travel experiences in *Childe Harold* III and so added a new layer of literary significance and association to the region. And from Rousseau and Byron in Switzerland, Watson moves on to consider the stimulus to tourism provided by Scott's depiction of Lake Katrine in *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), R.D. Blackmore's romanticization of Exmoor in *Lorna Doone* (1869), and finally Hardy's 'Wessex', with its curious amalgam of factual and fictional topographies.

At bottom, Watson suggests, this need to seek out the 'real' places associated with authors and fictions reflects anxieties attendant on print culture: she reads it as an attempt to establish a more intimate link between reader and author, thereby overcoming or bypassing the mediating influence of the printed text. Yet if this is the main underlying rationale for literary tourism,

each individual touristic destination emerges through the interplay of a subtly different range of cultural anxieties and aspirations, and Watson does an excellent job in teasing out the complexities specific to each site. Combining exemplary historical scholarship with considerable critical and theoretical sophistication, she offers sensitive readings on the one hand of the texts and literary careers that have brought about significant forms of literary tourism, and on the other, of the literary-touristic experience itself, which she sees as 'defined by nostalgic belatedness, and by a constitutive disappointment which returns the reader-tourist back to the text'. One might quibble that there was more to be said about the Grand Tour, arguably a slightly earlier mode of travel which also constituted a form of literary tourism insofar as it directed tourists to sites associated with the poetry of Virgil, Horace and other classical writers. Equally, I sometimes felt that it might have been useful if the discussion had distinguished more sharply between situations when the emergence of literary-touristic destinations was 'demand'-driven (i.e., when the fact that tourists were already visiting a site necessitated its further development into a tourist attraction), and when the stimulus came more from the 'supply'-side (i.e., when canny local authorities, property-owners and the like realised that they could exploit their region's association with a famous writer, and so worked to generate a touristic interest that perhaps had not existed previously). But these are minor quibbles: this is an impressive study that will prove useful not just to specialists in tourism and travel writing, but to all scholars of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature and culture.

Carl Thompson
Nottingham Trent University

Paula R. Feldman, ed., *The Keepsake for 1829*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2006. Pp. 360. £12.99. ISBN 9781551115856.

As Paula R. Feldman's erudite introduction to this facsimile edition of *The Keepsake* makes clear, literary annuals and gift books were among the most innovative of the various printed forms to emerge during the late Romantic period. Annuals such as *The Forget-me-Not*, *Friendship's Offering* and *The Keepsake*, which frequently sold between 10 and 20,000 copies per year, combined poetry and short stories with 'engravings of paintings by the most highly respected artists' into a beautiful package. First published in December 1827, *The Keepsake* was a relative latecomer to the trend for publishing annuals, but it became extremely popular by combining new features, such as the engraved presentation plate with a selection of poetry and prose from the most popular authors of the age. As Feldman notes, an advertisement that appeared in the *Athenaeum* and other literary periodicals in October 1828 drew readers' attention to the fact that the 1829 edition of the annual was to include 'such a List of Contributors' as had 'never before been presented to the Public'.

This was a promise that the advertiser kept. The 1829 annual contained contributions from authors whose work had rarely (sometimes never) appeared in the annuals before, such as Walter Scott, Percy Shelley, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thomas Moore and Mary Shelley, next to those, such as Letitia Landon and Felicia Hemans who were already famous for their contributions to the new periodical culture. Indeed, it is this gathering of Romantic superstars that has made this particular edition of *The Keepsake* the subject of recent critical investigation, such as Peter Manning's excellent study of 'Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*, 1829' which appeared in John Jordan and Robert Patten's *Literature in the Marketplace* (Cambridge, 1995). Feldman provides an extremely useful bibliography of books, chapters and articles that focus on the annuals to which Terence Hoagwood and

Kathryn Ledbetter's recent '*Colour'd Shadows*': *Contexts in Publishing, Printing, and Reading Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers* (Palgrave, 2005), with its chapters on L.E.L. and the visual art of *The Keepsake*, can now be added. (Hoagwood and Ledbetter are also the editors of a previous hardback 'facsimile' edition of the same edition of this annual [Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1999]).

Given the amount of recent critical attention given to the annuals, an affordable facsimile edition of *The Keepsake* is particularly welcome. The Broadview edition allows a modern audience to see how the work of some of the canonical authors of the Romantic period appeared in its original context. Scott's 'Death of the Laird's Jock' and 'Description of the Engraving Entitled a Scene at Abbotsford' are, as the latter's title suggests, entirely dependent upon the relationship between the written text and the visual image. In the former, Scott has much fun with the notion of creating a text for illustration. Such images were often abandoned when the text became part of an author's collected works and it is particularly interesting to see a poem such as Landon's 'Lady, thy Face is Very Beautiful' restored to its original context, where it accompanies an engraved portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford. As well as restoring the often lost relationship between image and text, this volume allows us to explore the dialogic relationship between the various authors that appeared in this volume. Landon's work, for example, benefits from being read in the context of other representations of female beauty such as Wordsworth's 'The Country Girl' with its accompanying engraving. Indeed, Broadview should be praised for the clarity of the illustrations, which are only a little darker than the originals.

Of course, the one thing that is missing from this reprint is the amount of what John Clare called 'gilt and finery' that went into the original. As Feldman notes, 'in their day' most annuals came beautifully 'bound in silk, pictorial paper boards or tooled leather, and sported leaves edged in gilt' which an affordable modern edition can never hope to reproduce. Feldman's introduction is very good at placing the development of the annual form within the

manuscript book tradition of the album, but I would like to have seen a fuller bibliographical description of the original 1829 edition of *The Keepsake*, which appeared in more than one form, and at least some commentary on the way in which even a 'facsimile' edition transforms the original object. Indeed, grateful as we should be for the opportunity to own and read a text such as this, not to have produced a critical edition seems a missed opportunity. Because of the significance of the annuals to the print culture of the late Romantic period there is a vast wealth of contemporary reviews and letters scattered across a range of different sources which could have been brought together to form a contextual appendix. It may also have allowed Feldman to shed further light on those authors such as Thomas Haynes Bayly who were important to the audience of the 1820s and 30s, but who feel a little over-shadowed here by more familiar names such as Wordsworth and Scott. Despite these reservations, this is a very useful addition to the range of recent publications that allow the modern reader to appreciate the various ways in which popular literary taste was forged during the Romantic period.

Stephen Colclough
University of Bangor

Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 266. £50. ISBN 0521858953.

'You have set a mark of separation upon us,' wrote Anna Letitia Barbauld in her *Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790), 'and it is not in our power to take it off, but it is in our power to determine whether it shall be a disgraceful stigma or an honourable distinction'. Taking Barbauld's defence of Dissent as its epigraph, Daniel White's book shows the importance of understanding that 'mark of separation' imposed on Dissenters, but it also, lucidly and convincingly, argues for the replacement of

Dissent at the very heart of early Romantic culture. White's study responds to and continues explorations of religious consciousness in the Romantic period, such as Robert Ryan's *The Romantic Reformation* (1997). Rather than considering the influence of religious ideas on specific writers, however, White focuses on Dissenters who – like Barbauld in her *Address* – saw themselves as constructing a public, political and literary identity for Dissent, 'an influential and distinct fragment of the bourgeois public sphere'. In the face of legal disenfranchisement, this body of articulate, commercially and intellectually powerful Dissenters represented itself, White argues, as 'producer and keeper of the national public's imagined cultural, political, and economic heritage'.

White begins by showing how this Dissenting grip on the nation's history and economy grew tighter through the eighteenth century, as 'the Bible and the ledger, the Christian and the tradesman' began to work together toward a vision of a mercantile, progressive future. The Dissenting Academies provide him with a nice example of the ways in which nonconformist emphasis on free enquiry and individual liberty fitted both with political freedom, and with burgeoning British commercial interests. The familial and intellectual networks of the Academies exerted a powerful influence within and beyond the ranks of Dissent to 'play a vital role in the image of the nation', and White argues for the lasting importance of the co-operative, sociable, commercially aware model of dialogue and exploration they fostered. It gave rise, he suggests, to 'a realized poetics of nonconformity, which was both a method and an ideal, a practice and a representation, of creativity'. We can glimpse it at work, for instance, in the 'patchwork' collaborations of Barbauld and her brother John Aikin, as an excellent chapter on the style and intentions of their joint productions, their *Joineriana*, shows. This articulation of a 'poetics of nonconformity' is the strength and the innovation of White's study. Not only does it offer a sustained argument for the historical and cultural importance of Dissent (and here White builds on the fascinating research of David L. Wykes,

Isabel Rivers, or Kathryn Gleadle, to name but a few), it then traces its impact on literary style, form, and tone in the period. The aim of the book is to offer an ‘account of the Dissenting genealogy of Romanticism’, and to show how key Romantic narratives of ‘lyric spontaneity and particularity, political dissidence and apostasy, and creative autonomy’ take shape against a background of Dissenting culture. So while we begin in the heartlands of eighteenth-century Dissent, with the Warrington Academy, Barbauld and Aikin, we move by the close of the study to Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Coleridge, and Southey, all shown to be deeply engaged with powerful models of Dissenting identity and creativity.

This is a story of resistance as well as reciprocity, of ‘conversation as well as contestation’, and separation as well as sociability. While Barbauld’s mention of ‘the mark of separation’ shows how a distinct Dissenting identity might be constructed and unified, such representations of public unity ran alongside crucial internal differences. White neatly and painstakingly underlines the importance of delineating particular denominational divisions, alert to the difference between, say, Arian Presbyterianism and Socinian Unitarianism, often lumped together in one blocky lump of nonconformity.

This allows him to provide nuanced repositionings of well-known texts such as Coleridge’s conversation poems, which he re-reads as a critique of the public sphere of ‘old Dissent’ he has set up in the preceding chapters. Thus, the private, meditative language of Coleridge’s conversation poems is read as a reaction against the shrewd awareness of economic self-interest inherent in older Dissenting models of collaboration – although there is a lurking consciousness in the chapter that, after all, Coleridge’s constructions of private, meditative ideals in ‘delicious solitude’ are themselves riven by anxiety and self-interest. White’s chapters on Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and Southey (the latter interestingly tackling *Thalaba* and engagement with Islam in the light of nonconformity) similarly argue that their persistent self-revisions through the 1790s should be seen in the light of larger negotiations

with the legacies of Dissent. Barbauld’s struggle to articulate the ‘separate’ identity of Dissent is thus shown to be part of a crucial conversation which stretches across the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – and, as White intricately and skilfully demonstrates, informs Romantic creativity in ways we are still learning to appreciate.

Felicity James
Christ Church, Oxford

David Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787-1832: The Road to the Stage*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp. 272. £50. ISBN 9780230518025.

The central aim of David Worrall’s contribution to the burgeoning body of critical material on Romantic period theatre is to show how non-patent theatres ‘developed within what had virtually become a separate sphere of drama, an essentially popular or plebeian network of intricate intertextuality largely cut off from the heritage of English spoken drama as exemplified by Shakespeare’. Building on the pioneering work of Gillian Russell and Jane Moody, Worrall has succeeded admirably in his endeavour with a book positively bursting with fascinating new material garnered primarily from the rich archive in the Huntington Library. The chapters discuss works which will be reasonably familiar to the dabbler in Romantic theatre studies such as Robert Merry’s *The Magician No Conjuror* (1792) and William Henry Ireland’s *Vortigern* (1796) as well as dramas much less well known such as Thoams Bellamy’s *The Benevolent Planters* (1789) and a variety of *Tom and Jerry* burlettas from the 1820s. Although drawing broad conclusions on the period from some of these works could be considered dubious, given the brevity of their runs in a repertory age (*The Benevolent Planters* lasted for two nights and Merry’s play fared little better with four performances), the observations made by Worrall through a process of close textual reading and a comprehensive

knowledge of contemporary stagecraft mitigate this concern considerably.

Burletta is central to Worrall's argument and he convincingly demonstrates over the course of the book that it was 'the dominant dramatic mode' of the period's non-patent theatres. Defined by Robert Elliston in a submission to the Lord Chamberlain as 'A PIECE IN VERSE ACCOMPANIED BY MUSIC', burletta was, along with silent pantomime, the only permissible medium of the non-patent theatres in Westminster and elsewhere. Worrall, following on from Joseph Donohue, convinces in his first chapter that we should be more concerned with burletta (musical speech) than melodrama (music and speech) as the latter was 'a genre...already subsumed under the burletta form'. In brief, 'melodrama and burletta were quite distinctive forms with different legal connotations for the playhouses who produced them'. Worrall stresses burletta's pragmatic appeal to dramatists and concludes that 'burletta was the optimum dramatic form to write or produce since it could be performed by the greatest number of playhouses'. How burletta reveals contemporary attitudes to issues such as race (chapter 3) and class (chapters 5 and 6) between the 1780s and 1820s forms the substance of Worrall's study.

My biggest difficulty with the book was the silence maintained on the patent theatres. While understandable, given the focus of the argument, the problem is that this may leave the uninitiated with the impression that Drury Lane and Covent Garden were perfectly polite, uncontested spaces that were inaccessible to half of London's population. This is demonstrably not the case as has been noted as far back as theatre historian Charles Beecher Hogan and perhaps Worrall could have acknowledged this, even in passing. Even radical dramatist Thomas Holcroft found cause to complain about the tumult of the patent theatres' audiences, perhaps most explicitly in his unpublished afterpiece *The Rival Queens* (1794) where the 'Box Lobby Buck' Tim Halfprice boasts 'I make the tour of the Lobbies - curse the Boxkeeper, bang the doors, talk loud to the Doxies - bawl / to Ned, Tom & Dick - pinch the Orange women till they / squeak again and take care that the whole house shall hear / as

little of the play as I do'. As the character's name and behaviour suggests, the patent theatres were indeed accessible to almost everyone and plebeian culture existed and evolved here too.

Although the admirable scale of the research that has gone into the book is evident, this creates some problems. On occasion the material even threatens to overwhelm Worrall which makes it difficult for the reader to unpick the main thread of the argument (for example, over the course of two paragraphs he uses the phrase 'to complicate matters further' three times). Conversely, information is repeated unnecessarily – we are told on numerous occasions in the third chapter, for example, that at the end of a typical Harlequin drama the eponymous hero must marry Columbine, a fact which may not need to be reiterated so frequently. Perhaps also, given the importance of location to the argument (playhouses being censored in different ways according to geography) and the 'bewildering' (a favourite word of Worrall's and perfectly apt here) material, the book would have benefited significantly from a map of the theatres. But this amounts to minor quibbling: David Worrall's book is both an intriguing and rewarding foray into the plebeian culture of the minor London playhouses.

David O'Shaughnessy
Linacre College, Oxford

Jonathan Roberts, *William Blake's Poetry: A Reader's Guide*. London: Continuum, 2007. Pp. 124. £10.99. ISBN 0826488609.

William Blake's Poetry must be assessed in the context of its intended audience and function, as part of Continuum's series of Reader's Guides. As the backcover copy has it, the Guides aim to be 'clear, concise and accessible introductions,' leading the reader ('undergraduate students' are particularly mentioned) via close reading to 'a thorough understanding of the text.' In pursuit of this goal, Roberts provides contextual chapters (one on history, one on aesthetics), a chapter

outlining the main themes and ideas of Blake's works, a chapter on critical responses, a chapter on Blake's broader cultural and artistic influence, and a chapter on further reading.

The contextual chapters, like any writing whose primary purpose is to provide information (rather than to interpret or to argue), naturally raise the questions of how much and which information needs to be provided. Undergraduates are, of course, a diverse lot, and individual instructors will need to assess whether their students require pages on the Enlightenment, John Milton and the French Revolution, as Roberts includes here. Other topics—Enthusiasm, Deism, the Sublime and Classicism—seem more obvious targets of clarification, and Roberts provides useful discussions of each. The mix of topics occasionally leads to treatments that seem too sweeping to be useful, but the breadth of Roberts' survey is impressive. This material is similar to what might be included in the biographical headnotes in one of the major anthologies, but with fuller detail and wider scope.

Putting these informational chapters aside, along with the chapters on critical and cultural reception, the main weight of the volume falls on its longest chapter, outlining an introductory approach to Blake's corpus. Given the pedagogical goals of the book, this chapter must speak to two key questions: what would help an undergraduate get the most out of Blake's texts? And, what would keep that undergraduate coming back to these texts? Roberts builds his answers on Blake's doctrine of contraries, deploying it as a framework for understanding *Songs of Innocence & of Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as well as the critique of Urizenic abstraction (described as an attempt at foreclosing the interplay of contraries). The contraries prove an effective foundation for consideration of a number of key Blakean ideas: the attitude to moral discourse, the satire on a distant father God, the antinomian account of Jesus, the rejection of empiricism, the humanist phenomenology, the ethic of forgiveness, and so on.

This framework, developed with admirable concision, would certainly provide an

undergraduate with a clear, though not reductive, set of ideas with which to approach Blake's texts (with the emphasis falling mainly on *Songs*, *Marriage* and *The Book of Urizen*). Much is to be gained, then, in student comprehension when first encountering Blake with this guide, but one must also consider what might be lost. A guide, after all, whether textual or of the flesh-and-blood variety, is not neutral, but leads one in directions which might otherwise have gone unpursued. The genre of the 'guide' or the 'companion' (an ever-growing sector of academic publishing) imagines a kind of understanding of the text before reading it, a coming to the text with understanding already in hand, rather than the disorienting experience of wandering around a text unguided.

This is more than just an academic question, as is reflected in Roberts' reading of the 'Chimney Sweeper' poems, among the few texts he gives a detailed discussion. In keeping with his emphasis on the way a moral discourse of good and evil negates the salutary interplay of contraries, Roberts casts Tom Dacre's dream of heavenly liberation as a wholly disempowering illusion, dangerous in its ability to distract the sweeps from their oppressive situation. Such a reading makes sense, of course, but the salient question is the degree to which the explanatory framework 'guides' readers to this interpretation to the exclusion of all others. There's also the issue of the *status* of an interpretation in the context of a guide: when surrounded by informational statements, testable as simply true or false, there's a sense in which interpretations themselves take on the authority of information, however improperly.

Roberts, it should be noted, is aware of this representational problem, particularly pressing with a figure such as Blake. He confesses at the end of the interpretive chapter that he has 'presented a Urizenic rationalization of [Blake's] work that can deliver only a partial perspective on what he offers'. Instructors will have to weigh the undoubted benefit of putting their students in the sure hand of a guide such as Roberts against the limitations which come with giving students the golden string which will lead them out of the Blakean labyrinth.

Nicholas M. Williams, Indiana University

Uttara Natarajan, ed., *The Romantic Poets: A Guide to Criticism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. Pp. 359. Hb.: £50. ISBN 9780631229315.

Michael O'Neill and Charles Mahoney, eds, *Romantic Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. Pp. 471. Pb.: £19.99. ISBN 9780631213178.

Since the development of a variety of strands of ethical literary criticism in the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of cultural studies in the 1970s, and the concomitant turn to history in the early 1980s, a widespread sense has emerged that Romanticism's 'Big Six' – while still popular in the teaching of the period and in the group's dominance as the subjects of published research – has been fully shaken from the marble pedestal on which it reigned in all its unquestioned, male, middle- and upper-class superiority. That cosy world of inward-looking, predominantly male, poetic circles – be they around an 'immortal' dinner table, various Wordsworth residences or the Villa Diodati – has been fractured by an acceptance that the actual literary scene was far more diverse, complicated, political, and generically playful than a narrow focus on just a few male poets ever allowed. Now it seems as legitimate to talk in scholarly terms about poems used for advertising as it does to dismiss the concept of an anachronistically-formed, self-confirming movement previously known as Romanticism. When I talk about canonicity with my students I have used my own experience to show how things have changed in the past twenty or so years: as an undergraduate in the USA in 1993, I was guided through the poetry of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats (with hindsight all of it life-changing admittedly) but hardly anyone else's name from the period was mentioned. As a tutor I am no special case: led by colleagues and the widening pursuits of contemporary anthologies, editions and above all criticism, I have introduced my students to all of the Big Six of course, but also to the likes of Austen, Barbauld, Bloomfield, Burns, Clare, De Quincey, Equiano, Goethe, Hogg, Landon, Lewis, More, Peacock, Prince,

Radcliffe, Rousseau, Scott, Wollstonecraft and so on. There is no reason to expect that we all teach the same texts, but is the avoidance of exclusive focus upon Big Six roughly what teaching Romantic period literature involves today? If these books are to be our guides, we need to wake up to a new development: the male canon is back.

Uttara Natarajan's beautifully packaged collection of edited extracts of criticism of Romantic poetry is structured into the following chapters: 1.) William Blake 2.) William Wordsworth 3.) Samuel Taylor Coleridge 4.) George Gordon, Lord [*sic*] Byron 5.) Percy Bysshe Shelley 6.) John Keats. These opening sections of critical survey, critical extracts and suggested reading are all authoritatively pithy, lucidly introduced and of great use for undergraduates. This takes us to page 313, where the seventh section – misleadingly entitled 'The Expanding Canon', is 23 pages long and consists of two lean sections: 'John Clare' gets 10 pages with one excerpt from John Barrell, while the tokenistic 'Romantic Women Poets' is allotted a ghetto of just 12 pages, again with just one critical excerpt, this time from Stuart Curran (both examples prove that Natarajan's critical choices are always adroit). No matter what the bold title of this final section may claim, the vast majority of Natarajan's collection suggests the poetic canon has not 'expanded' *at all* – indeed, if anything it is showing signs of becoming 'cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd' all over again.

A tension arises in the fact this is a collection of critical extracts which does well to present the breadth of debate in twentieth-century critical work on Romanticism, but always through the confining lens of the Big Six. Some of the same critics included here led inexorably to the dissembling of the canon, indeed to the interrogation of Romanticism as an ideology and its gradual replacement with a detailed sense of a Romantic literary *period* rather than a restrictive, exclusive *-ism* (names like Frye and Hartman are implicitly responded to by McGann and Levinson – all of them extracted here). So if this book is to be our guide through Romantic poetry (and it is so good at what it does that I wish it could be), then the canon is indeed back,

if in a compromised critical shape. Natarajan contests that ‘the established canon of “Romantic” poets has been so widely contested, augmented and critiqued, that it might well be argued that it has ceased to exist.’ It ‘might well be argued’ elsewhere that a narrow canon is thoroughly illegitimate, but not by this collection, whose publication suggests that the old male canon is as dominant, and unreconstructed, as ever it was.

The second Blackwell publication under consideration here is ‘an annotated anthology’ of poetry. Like Natarajan’s, Michael O’Neill and Charles Mahoney’s excellent teaching text is squarely aimed at the undergraduate market. Similarly this poetry anthology is impressive because of its carefully lucid headnotes and footnotes, its thematic contents list and its textual reliability, all of which are of a very high order and demonstrably framed to be accessible and useful to students. The substantial introductions to each poem are painstakingly put together, and are as reliable a set of textual helpmeets as I can recall seeing in a recent teaching text.

But the same issue of canonicity arises here. The male poets included are exclusively the Big Six, while the editors collect a ‘Big Four’ of female poets: Smith, Barbauld, Hemans and Landon. No one else gets a look in. This is of course a defensible decision to have taken, especially in light of the editors having to balance inclusion with the perceived marketability of the final product, not to mention its potentially fraught position in relation to Duncan Wu’s pervasive, much larger, anthology (reared in the same Blackwell stable. O’Neill acknowledges Wu’s help with this anthology). And as in the Wu anthology, women poets in O’Neill and Mahoney’s text do warrant a slice of the pie. But if we combine our two groups of poets’ names with a crude accounting of pages, O’Neill and Mahoney’s inclusion of the women suddenly crumbles into tokenism. While the poems of the Big Six exhale into the open fields of about 421 pages in this anthology, the group of women (which we should really label the ‘Little Four’) are crammed into a dingy back parlour of 43 pages. The implication is surely clear: the Big Six form 90% of what we should pursue in the

study of Romantic poetry: essentially, they are the ‘best’ poets of the period, period. As a pair, these two Blackwell textbooks could be the bedrock of a stimulating, critically-alert undergraduate course of canonical Romantic poetry. But do we want the canon back?

The sheer amount of scholarly energy, expertise and editorial skill evident in the quality of both of these texts, combined with Blackwell’s beautiful packaging, seems somewhat wasted to those of us who think the study of the period’s poetry is no longer as settled as it used to be. Perhaps the two books signal a sudden reduction of the diversity of Romanticisms? Perhaps they attempt to move us back to form, back to the patrilineal conception of ‘two generations’ of six male poets? Perhaps this return will be our future: a return to the inward-looking devilment of aesthetics contextualised through narrowed poetic networks, over, above and far, far away from the palsied concerns of crude, intensive, complicating history? Because if only the Big Six are worth mentioning in the main, then that is where we are already. Books like this do not just follow critical cues; when successful they are hugely influential. They can determine the lineaments of the discipline. With the scholarly authority evident in the making of both publications, they are potentially set to lead, to coax our teaching in certain directions, to encourage student access and interest in relatively restricted areas. Whatever reason lies behind the editorial choices – be it perceived global market, the significance of form over history, pedagogical pragmatism, critical currents, a bold if latent rejection of ‘minor’ writers – both texts effectively re-inscribe the narrow canon of old.

Simon Kövesi
Oxford Brookes University

John Lauritsen, *The Man Who Wrote Frankenstein*. Dorchester, MA: Pagan Press, 2007. Pp. 232. Pb.: \$16.95. ISBN 9780943742144.

In an age of proliferating conspiracy theories, it is no surprise that *The Man Who Wrote Frankenstein* caused a minor ripple or two in the mainstream press when it was published last year. John Lauritsen's theory that the canonical Romantic novel was entirely written not by Mary, but by Percy Shelley was credulously presented by the media as having caused something of a bombshell in the world of literary criticism. Of course, debate over the authorship of *Frankenstein* is nothing new in Romantic studies. Over the years, some respectable research has proposed the influence of Percy Shelley and William Godwin as editors-cum-collaborators in the editions of the novel published during Mary's lifetime.

However, Lauritsen's presentation of Percy Shelley as the sole author of *Frankenstein* is merely the starting point for his wider idea that the novel has 'consistently been underrated and misinterpreted' by generations of critics, and that its dominant theme is that of male, homosexual love. The first reaction of the open-minded to this bold thesis may well be: why not? Where feminist and Marxist readings have already imposed their own contemporary agendas on this early nineteenth-century novel, might not there be room for some further useful discussion of a homo-erotic interpretation? Maybe so, but I'm afraid that this book is not the one to do it. The way in which Lauritsen applies and presents his ideas is altogether too strident, quarrelsome, opinionated, single-minded, and contemptuously dismissive of all that has come before it to be taken seriously as a scholarly work.

Lauritsen's espousal of Percy, rather than Mary Shelley's authorship of *Frankenstein* is based largely on his withering criticism of the 'clumsy, lifeless prose' that can unquestionably be attributed to Mary alone: her letters, journal, and other novels such as *The Last Man*. The 'flaccid, sentimental, verbose, affected' language in these works cannot, he says, have

been written by the same person that wrote *Frankenstein*.

In comparison, Lauritsen contends that the 'highly poetic' prose in *Frankenstein* can only have been written by Percy. This aspect of it has gone undetected, he says, due to the 'tin ears' of 'supposedly educated people' and 'tenured professors' who are fit only to 'decode its content or expiate on its context'. Besides, despite much of the 'inane discussion' he has heard from people (such as, on one occasion, a 'female who twittered endlessly') about Mary's authorship, Lauritsen peremptorily declares that *Frankenstein* is clearly 'a *man's* book' (his italics). We might thus reasonably expect there to follow a detailed textual analysis of the novel, illustrating this contention. Alas, the 'Textual Evidence' he presents consists largely of anecdotal reminiscences of how well the college professors who taught him could recite poetry, with some workaday comparisons between Mary's manuscript and Percy's editorial revisions.

Indeed, by far the longest chapter in Lauritsen's book is that entitled 'Male Love in *Frankenstein*', which presents his homo-erotic reading of the novel. It is in this hitherto unappreciated aspect of the text, he says, that the 'proof' of Percy's authorship lies. Here, to the exclusion of all other possible interpretations, Lauritsen systematically constructs his thesis, finding references in support of his reading in the most unlikely and unconvincing places. Thus, Victor Frankenstein's references to 'finding a friend' in Walton are glossed in the sense of 'friend' meaning – so we are told in a footnote – 'a code word for the lover of another male' in eighteenth-century Germany. Similarly, another footnote advises that Henry Clerval rejoicing at Victor's 'gaiety' during their walking tour should be construed in the 'sense of all-male eroticism' that 'goes back at least to the late eighteenth century'.

Such etymologies lead inevitably to Lauritsen's contention that, in building his creature, Victor Frankenstein wanted to create 'a big, beautiful and obedient sex partner' who will 'get in bed with him'. This view of the creature as sex-object is underlined by the author's admiring critique of Chevalier and Holst's 1831

pictorial representation: 'His abdominals are impressive and must have been developed by thousands of leg raises, sit-ups, ab-crunches...His legs are beautiful.'

Whilst Lauritsen is, of course, perfectly entitled to his opinions, it is his abrasive hostility to the opinions of others that leaves a nasty taste here. He deploys ironic punctuation to disparage his academic opponents, placing quotation marks around the word 'scholar' whenever he refers to them as such. There is even *ad hominem* criticism of individuals who have dared to oppose his earlier writings and his correspondence in the NASSR email list, such as his waspish references to a respected American academic, whom he sarcastically dubs 'the Dean of Romantic Studies'.

Though Lauritsen's book has drawn admiring 'chortles and guffaws' from figures such as Camille Paglia for its attack on the 'insularity and turgidity' of parts of academia, heterodoxy alone is no reason to take dissenting views seriously. (Take, for instance, Lauritsen's other obsession – his contention that AIDS is caused by consuming amyl nitrite 'poppers', rather than by the HIV virus.) However heartfelt or thought-provoking Lauritsen's beliefs may be, the way he presents them is unlikely to be appealing to many of the 'freethinkers' he claims to represent.

Christopher Goulding
Newcastle upon Tyne,
www.christopher-goulding.com

Erin L. Webster-Garrett, *The Literary Career of Novelist Mary Shelley After 1822: Romance, Realism, and the Politics of Gender*. Lewiston, NY and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. Pp. 237. £69.95. ISBN 9780773455641.

The terms of engagement of this new study will be familiar: Mary Shelley challenges romantic male self-mythicising, patriarchy, and notions of Genius, reinscribing instead the values of Wollstonecraftian rationality, sympathy and love; she does not so much transmit the legacies

of her husband and father as problematize them; she was not a one-book author; the alleged break between a radical young Shelley, and a conservative middle-aged Shelley is a simplistic mapping of a complex development, and so on. However (after giving a clear and useful overview of the current state of Mary Shelley criticism) it offers some unusual perspectives, including a suggestion that Shelley developed an 'aesthetic of the novel', which led her finally to reject the novel as a 'necessary evil, and particularly in the case of women'.

The argument is chiefly structured in terms of gender. Despite an expressed intention to play down psychobiography and concentrate on literary qualities, there is not much attention paid to the formal qualities of Shelley's prose, though the romance genre is discussed in detail. The title signals that the study is primarily about Shelley as novelist, not Shelley as biographer or travel-writer. However, Shelley's lesser-known review articles are cited; there is a close examination of her 'Journal of Sorrow' and despite the 'After 1822' of the title there is quite a lengthy discussion of the 1819 *Mathilda*.

What is especially distinctive here is the focus on the late novels of the 1830s. This is the most thorough-going attempt yet to give the centre stage to *Lodore* (1835), *Falkner* (1837) and the neglected *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830). This last ('poor Perkin Warbeck', as Shelley called this victim of the 1830 publishing slump) is at the core of this study. Shelley bravely took the contrarian view that Perkin Warbeck, the imposter-claimant to the English throne, really was the younger of the two Princes in the Tower. This book is also, in its own way, brave, and the two chapters devoted to *Warbeck* are its strongest and most interesting portion.

Webster-Garrett is already well-known among Mary Shelley specialists as the author of the adventurous *Perkin Warbeck* Project on *Web of Mind*

(<<http://www.radford.edu/~webofmind/pwp.htm>>), devoted to the reclamation of lost texts. Some of the chapter 'Romancing History' will be familiar to accessors of this site. She puts forward a case for reading and rereading *Warbeck* attentively that is all the more

persuasive because she is ready to admit that the novel has its faults. She offers a spirited vindication of Shelley's political and novelistic intelligence, and her chapter contains many original remarks and acute perceptions. She notes, for instance that the novel conducts an intertextual debate with Bacon's *Henry the Seventh*. For Webster-Garrett, the quarrel with Bacon is one of the keys to what Mary Shelley is about in the novel. Bacon 'represents Warbeck as effeminate, illegitimate, and criminal Through the metaphor of effeminate imposture, Shelley could explore her own marginality in a gender-segregated literary market.' The other chapter, 'Romancing Revolution' goes further than previous studies in contextualizing *Warbeck* within British concern with Spanish liberalism and anxieties about empire. Future commentators on *Warbeck* will need to pay heed to these chapters. Webster-Garrett is well-read in the scholarly and critical work of her predecessors, though, curiously, she does not remark on the meticulously-researched, groundbreaking annotations of Doucet Devin Fischer's 1996 edition (which is drawn on for page-references). The chapters that deal with *Lodore* and *Falkner* seem less distinctive, but usefully continue Jeanne Moskal's identification of the importance of the Quixote and Female Quixote figures in Shelley's fiction.

Webster-Garrett's mission to present Shelley as pre-eminently subversive of or oppositional to male writers such as Scott and Godwin can lead her into inaccuracy and over-heatedness. These proclivities blemish otherwise sensible arguments. We are told, for instance, that the essay 'Giovanni Villani' 'ends with a telling celebration . . . not of a poet nor of a man' but of 'two outcast women-writers', Shelley and Wollstonecraft. But the brief passage on Wollstonecraft is only a third of the way in; the essay actually ends with a celebration of Dante. Again, we are surprised to learn – no references given – that 'Mary Shelley... voraciously memorized her father's private journal, the place in which he recorded all manner of details about his relationship with Wollstonecraft, including their coital frequency', implying that this was a formative experience of Shelley's adolescence. The 'all manner of details' are in fact minimalist

and coded; nor is there any evidence for her memorization of Godwin's diaries, which, along with her parents' correspondence, she most probably did not read until after Godwin's death. Treating Shelley as seeking to define an aesthetic of the novel without situating her more firmly within a wider literary culture of the 1830s – British, American and Continental – does make it hard for Webster-Garrett to build her case. But to say that Webster-Garrett leaves us wishing for more contextualization and breadth is a corollary of saying that she makes Mary Shelley's late novels more accessible while leaving space for further expositions of her as a writer of the Romantic-Victorian interface.

Nora Crook
Anglia Ruskin University

Jane Stabler, ed., *Palgrave Advances in Byron Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp. 287. Pb.: £19.99. ISBN 9781403945938.

The Palgrave Advances series aims to 'orientate graduate and upper-level students within the current state' of various fields of literary study, to provide 'introductions to and overviews of the key debates' in those fields and to 'survey, question and push the boundaries of the discipline'. In this volume, which showcases a 'variety of [...] critical approaches' to Byron, some contributors attempt to cover all these bases, others focus on questioning and boundary-pushing. The result is an excellent introduction to the 'current state' of Byron Studies that also offers a number of original and valuable interventions.

Jane Stabler opens the volume with a useful overview of Byron's return to the critical mainstream since the 1960s and of the critical approaches to Byron that have been especially fruitful since, keying the chapters that follow into wider, ongoing debates. As with all the chapters, a list of suggested further reading follows.

Steven Bruhm's 'Byron and the Choreography of Queer Desire' then discusses 'a quality of observation and expression in Byron' that Bruhm sees as 'queer', though not necessarily 'genitally homosexual'. Focusing on *The Waltz* and *Don Juan*'s descriptions of Juan dancing, Bruhm's 'queer' analysis uncovers the 'erotic poetics' to be found in Byron's 'captivated and shameless consumption of the male dancer'.

In 'Byron and the Politics of Editing', Peter Cochran argues that Byron 'should have had more honour done to his manuscripts by editors than has been the case'. Cochran shows the damage done by the many editorial attempts to 'curb' and 'tidy-up' Byron's use of capitals and dashes. He casts a critical eye over the editing of *The Vision of Judgement* in *The Liberal*, E. H. Coleridge's edition of Byron's poetry and the now-standard Jerome McGann edition. He concludes that every reader of Byron 'has to be [...] his or her own editor' and should follow Byron's own advice: 'Consult to M.S. *always*'.

Paul Curtis's 'Byron and Digression' reads Byronic digression as 'linguistic performance' and 'performative language', seeing it as 'the sign *and* performance of the potential of language'. Curtis demonstrates the power of *Don Juan*'s digressions 'to multiply, even aestheticize, the ironic possibilities of form', evoking 'a verbal world that far exceeds in scope the already considerable world evoked by the narration' and implying 'the potential of what might be created through language'.

In 'Byron and History', Caroline Franklin reviews the historicist trends in Romantic Studies since the 1980s that have helped to facilitate the critical rehabilitation of Byron and thinks about ways forward for historicist Byron criticism. She suggests some of the ways in which 'future studies could pay some attention to Byron's own historicism', then brings 'together the historicisms of both poet and critic' to show how *Don Juan* 'still challenges us [...] to detach ourselves from the libertine/victim binaries which shaped nineteenth-century gender politics, and to imagine a freedom for women outside the puritan inheritance'.

Peter Kitson's 'Byron and Post-Colonial Criticism: The Eastern Tales' surveys the critical debate about Romantic Orientalism since Said

and recent post-colonial developments in the critical discussion of Byron's engagement with 'the East'. Kitson then shows how post-colonial approaches to Byron's tales can highlight their exploration of 'the failure of cosmopolitanism where people prefer suicide, assassination and slaughter to tolerance and compromise' and their 'critique of West and East alike'.

'Drawing on psychoanalytical theories of fantasy and the fetish', Ghislaine McDayter's 'Byron and Twentieth-Century Popular Culture' offers a psychoanalytical reading of both the 'fetishization/commodification of Byron as a object of desire' by his 'fans' and the scholarly condemnation of this 'interest in the *body* of the poet' (as opposed to his 'corpus'). For McDayter, this kind of analysis not only reveals Freudian 'strategies of desire' at play in popular constructions of Byron, but also exposes Byron scholarship's 'own form of fetishism' in its attempts to 'distance' itself 'from the embarrassingly libidinal' Byron 'fan'.

Timothy Morton's 'Byron's *Manfred* and Ecocriticism' sees Byron 'trying to induce in us a smart ecological awareness' in *Manfred*. Here, *Manfred*'s 'physical and psychic darkness', 'challenge to solipsism', 'scepticism', 'voice [...] heard singing' in Act I and Witch of the Alps all have 'an ecological resonance', while the play's irony 'begins to provide the basis for a fresh way of thinking ecologically' by planting 'a little seed of love and hope, even in the hard, dark soil of almost-nothingness'. Read ecologically, Morton suggests, *Manfred* 'might help us to disarm the nuclear bomb, and live with other beings in peace'.

'Applying Freud's theory of the double', argue Pamela Kao and David Punter in 'Byron and Psychoanalytical Criticism: *Werner*', allows us to 'explore the psychological complexity of *Werner* in the context of its Gothic form'. Focusing on the play's doublings of characters, its 'recurrent themes' and its 'twinning' of images, this essay suggests both that 'Freud's ideas' have a 'quite specific' 'relevance' to Byron and that Byron's work 'offers a prefiguration' of 'later psychoanalytic theories'. Michael Simpson's 'Byron in Theory and Theatre Land: Finding the Right Address' challenges our understanding of Byron's 'theatre

theory' by unearthing a 'blueprint for reconstructing Drury Lane as a new national theatre' in Byron's 'theatrical addresses' of 1812 and 1816. Simpson finds this blueprint 'inconsistent with itself' in its attempts to posit a national theatre that is also cosmopolitan, but argues that in at least one instance, *Marino Faliero*, Byron's dramatic practice is directed at, and goes some way towards, reconciling precisely these seemingly irreconcilable priorities.

In 'Byron and War: Sketches of Spain: Love and War in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*', Philip Shaw offers a psychological reading of the 'alleged inconsistencies' in Byron's attitude to war. Comparing Byron to Freud, Shaw argues that for both war is 'a mode of contradiction' that entwines 'opposing desires, chiefly love and hate'. He suggests that this 'paradoxical consistency' in Byron's attitude to war reveals a fascination with 'the role that destruction plays in the forging' – as well as the destabilising – 'of identity'.

Nanora Sweet answers criticism of *Childe Harold IV*'s "'looseness" of form' with an 'intertextual' approach in 'Byron and Intertextuality: Laureate Triumph in *Childe Harold IV*: Staël, Hemans, Hobhouse, Byron'. She argues that the canto 'reads best in the context' of the 'laureate triumph', a form that 'fosters relations among texts' – 'many of its passages are booty from other people's work' – and for this 'requires [...] "looseness"'. Sweet then details the kinds of 'booty' Byron's 'laureate triumph' takes from Staël, Hemans and Hobhouse.

Finally, in 'Don Juan and the Shiftings of Gender', Susan Wolfson focuses on Byron's 'heightened awareness of the artifice of gender'. Discussing episodes of cross-dressing in *Don Juan*, Wolfson points to the homoeroticism, proto-feminism and liberalism in their 'denaturalizing and theatricalizing of gender as an "act"'. However, she also shows how *Don Juan*'s transvestitism can 'appeal to customary patterns of privilege – male, aristocratic, European', and how, through that transvestitism, Byron 'works out renewed expressions of male power'.

Other approaches to Byron could, of course, have been explored in this volume, while some of the approaches demonstrated are more productively applied to Byron than others. Nevertheless this collection of essays is, by turns, informative, instructive, suggestive, stimulating and provocative.

Alan Rawes
University of Manchester

W. A. Speck, *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. Pp. 305. £25. ISBN 0300116810.

The author of magazine verse, epic poetry, histories, biographies, review articles and even a humorous novel, Robert Southey's literary output was prolific and diverse. Innovative and indomitable in his engagement with religious, political and social topics, appreciation of his work demands knowledge of its socio-historical context, and this is what *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters* eloquently provides. This comprehensive and scholarly biography creates a careful chronology of Southey's life and career. It combines an overview of his literary work, his responses to contemporary events, insights into his character and relationships, and an objective representation of his progression from political revolutionary to advocate of the establishment. In so doing it recaptures Southey's complex, contradictory nature; informed as it is by a wealth of archival research (on both sides of the Atlantic) and presented as an accessible and thoughtful account of his life.

The early chapters will be familiar to many, as they draw on Southey's autobiographical memoirs of his childhood from his letters to John May; although Speck does point out their inconsistencies. Southey's own narrative offers less insight into his development as an author than one might wish, as he was not given to introspective excavation of his emotions (in the Wordsworthian mould). Nevertheless the rebellious nature of Southey the child, which the adult narrator revels in, is a prominent aspect of

his character, and a notable influence on his future career. And while Southey eschews discussion of his inner self, his biographer supplies fascinating insights into his early creative influences. His adolescent fantasies are revealed in an extract from his early, unpublished three-volume Gothic novel *Harold, or the Castle of Morford*. The origins of his graphic imagination can be found in trips to the theatre with his eccentric aunt to see the bloodiest of plays. His radicalization too, it is suggested here, originated in his expulsion from school after denouncing the practice of flogging in the *Flagellant*.

The fact too that Southey kept a 'dream book' displays awareness of his youthful subconscious; an element that never developed, perhaps because of the strong moral influence of his friend Edmund Seward, at Oxford, and later due to the pressures of having to earn his 'ways and means'. The lack of paternal influence, compounded by his father's early death, led Southey to seek male role models for moral guidance (Seward and John Rickman being notable examples). The close relationships he formed with boyhood and university friends fulfilled his emotional and intellectual needs and generally lasted his lifetime. One of the most binding of these (cemented in their joint union with the Fricker sisters) was that with Coleridge. For both men, after the murder of Brissot in France (in 1793), oppression existed everywhere; except possibly a cottage community in America. Here they planned to enact a revolution in human behaviour by applying philosophical principles (from Paine and Godwin) to their infant society.

However, Southey's stoical moral principles soon led to a loss of sympathy with Coleridge (and their project), despite their political and poetical similarities. As Carlyle was to observe of Southey, he had a 'rage conscious to itself of being just', which was channelled into a strict programme of work, and subsequently a voluminous portfolio of publications. If his reputation has now been reclaimed as an 'entire man of letters', it was also this aspect of his work that condemned him to oblivion for the later nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, due to its non-conformity to

'Romantic' aesthetic conventions. Now he is regarded as an important commentator of his time; for his literary heterogeneity, his prescient pronouncements on industrialisation, his championship of labouring-class poets, his writing on empire, and politically, as 'a missing link in the development of English Conservatism between Burke and Disraeli'.

Speck's description of Southey's later years, surrounded by his extended family on the 'aunt hill' of Greta Hall in Keswick, depicts a dedicated, purposeful, concerned individual. Critics of Southey's apostasy often neglect his life-long endeavours to 'mend' society, for which he employed the resources of his massive library, rather than retreating into it. Southey's core belief, 'I aim at lessening human misery and bettering the condition of all the lower classes' was one he felt he abided by all his life. The mob-dominated politics (and ensuing social unrest) he feared, because he believed such popular movements lacked the intellectual engagement of his own generation's radicalism, led him to advocate a programme of universal education. This measure, along with Southey's promotion of military reform and state-sponsored employment, marks him out as progressive in Speck's revisionist account of his political development.

Southey the 'entire' man appears here; a father who suffered the deaths of his children, a husband who despaired at his wife's melancholia, and was diverted by flirtatious relationships with the women who inspired him: Mary Barker and Caroline Bowles. That such personal events were not peripheral, but integral, to his writing, are demonstrated by Speck in Southey's most perennial work, his *Life of Nelson*, where the influence of his feelings for Barker provide a more sympathetic account of his subject's romantic entanglements, than might otherwise have been the case. Southey was a more complex character than is often acknowledged (as the publication of his *Collected Letters* will make clear) and it is in demonstrating this aspect of him that Speck's biography is particularly successful.

Carol Bolton
Loughborough University

Stephen Gill, ed., *William Wordsworth's The Prelude: A Casebook*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. 406. Hb.: £ 60.00. ISBN 9780195180916. Pb.: £19.99. ISBN 9780195180923.

As one of the editors of the highly respected Norton Critical Edition of *The Prelude*, and author of *William Wordsworth 'The Prelude'* for Cambridge University Press's 'Landmarks in Literature' series, Stephen Gill is an obvious person to edit the new Oxford 'Casebook'. Gill's credentials are impeccable, with two major studies, *William Wordsworth: A Life*, and *Wordsworth and the Victorians* to his credit, and a life-long commitment to Wordsworth scholarship. More recently he has also edited the *Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*. In his early years as a Wordsworth scholar he worked closely with Jonathan Wordsworth, whose criticism was influential in defining the taste by which Wordsworth would be enjoyed by many studying or teaching Wordsworth in Britain in recent years. The two men produced a reading text of the Two-Part *Prelude* of 1799, for the third edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1974), a text that later became a feature of the Norton *Prelude*. Jonathan Wordsworth described the Two-Part *Prelude* as containing 'within its small compass much of Wordsworth's most famous and impressive poetry'. In time it has become popular as a manageable substitute for students daunted by the prospect of having to study the fourteen book *Prelude* of 1850, or the text described as 'finished' in 1805, addressed specifically to Coleridge – and who might be particularly thankful for the new Casebook.

The Casebook series introduces 'readers to the essential criticism of landmark works' and each is edited by 'a distinguished scholar' who 'has collected the most elucidating and distinctive essays on a work', and who provides 'a substantial introduction that considers the key features of the work, describes its publication history, and contextualises its cultural import and critical reception'. As can be expected, Gill's Introduction amply demonstrates his

scholarly expertise in all these areas. He raises several of the finer points that any serious study of *The Prelude* must address – especially those relating to the existence of two different texts, which represent their poet in two very different states of mind. Ernest De Selincourt's decision to publish the 1805 text in 1926 can be seen to have inspired the later production of the Cornell Wordsworth, and both Jonathan Wordsworth and Gill were in the vanguard of those concerned to privilege earlier, rather than later versions of Wordsworth's texts. Gill edited the inaugural edition of The Cornell Wordsworth series – *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, and his 1984 edition of Wordsworth's poetry for The Oxford Author's series followed the same principles.

Helen Darbishire heralded the publication of De Selincourt's parallel text edition of *The Prelude* with the words. 'No event so important as this has happened in the literary world for many years'. But today *The Prelude* occupies a far less significant role in the literary world. It is a work largely neglected after the demise of High Romantic criticism with its central preoccupation with 'the Imagination'. But the situation *now* invites the possibility for new readings of the poem – ones that might discover more to the poem than Coleridge-inspired readings that find it to celebrate the creative imagination, or present a narrative of poetic election. Wordsworth's original 1805 'Address to Coleridge' did neither of these things. It offered an argument to Coleridge that set out a differing appreciation of Imagination to that held by Coleridge, one based on Stoic philosophical principles that refused any belief in a transcendental imagination. And its celebration of spontaneous numbers overflowing from the mind of the youthful Wordsworth, in the *too* glad preamble, is an ironic representation of a poet who is *incapable* 'Of building up a Work that should endure'. In contrast the Stoic 'Prophet of Nature', whose ethos is celebrated at the end of the poem declares he has just such a capability. But Gill's Introduction takes it for granted that *The Prelude* is a work that 'both explained and through the originality and quality of its verse, exemplified all that he had

pronounced on over the years about the importance of the creative imagination’.

It is only the 1850 text that *can* be read – with Coleridge’s direction and assistance – as a work that celebrates the importance of the ‘creative imagination’, though I do not believe Wordsworth ever intended such a reading. It is therefore curious to see Gill, who has spent his career arguing for the importance of studying the earliest version of Wordsworth’s texts, making a remark that can only be applied – and that questionably – to the 1850 *Prelude*. The 1805 text expressed no such claims, and although ‘the main essential power / Imagination’ is acknowledged to be a ‘sublime’ power of the mind, Fancy – which is aligned with ‘the beautiful’ - is *also* given her due - along with the works of men, which must be given equal place with the works of Nature because they are, essentially, one. Wordsworth’s commitment to Stoic ideals required him to argue for a ‘one-life’ philosophy (not one provided for him by Coleridge) in which the two powers worked in tandem, and could not be conceived of according to the dualism implicit in Coleridge’s understanding of ‘Imagination’. Wordsworth was still committed to a materialist (empiricist) Stoic position that was opposed to Coleridge’s Christianity and his transcendentalism in 1805. Perhaps he did change his mind at a later date, as he changed his philosophical principles to accommodate Christianity, with its promise of better world beyond this one. But in 1805 (and even in 1815) he remained committed to a different world-view and a different understanding of ‘Imagination’ to that defined for him, later, by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*. In writing *Biographia* Coleridge related that he had done his Duty to himself and the public in ‘completely subverting’ Wordsworth’s theory – and his ‘radically Different’ appreciation of Imagination.

Gill divides the passages selected for his edition into three sections. The first, focussing broadly on matters of ‘poetic form and language’, contains work by Christopher Ricks, Susan Wolfson, Mary Jacobus, and Lucy Newlyn. The second section on ‘Nature, Imagination and God’ gives voice to the

venerable, High Romantic arguments of Geoffrey Hartman, Meyer Abrams and Jonathan Wordsworth, which are offset by the most recently published essay in the collection, by William Ulmer. The third section covers ‘questions essentially of the politics of identity and nation, of history, and ecology’ with essays by Anne Mellor, Howard Erskin-Hill, Richard Gravil, Alan Liu and Jonathan Bate. With the exception Gravil’s essay all the works chosen are excerpts from full-length studies. One criticism is the brevity of the section on Selected Reading. A list of significant essays gleaned from leading journals and other collections would also be a useful resource for readers wanting to find a broader range of approaches to *The Prelude*.

One of the troubling aspects of Gill’s selection is the emphasis he gives to the High Romantic perspective in the central section of the book, republishing work by Abrams and Hartman that already exists in the now-dated ‘Recent Critical Essays’ of the 1979 Norton *Prelude*. Gill also gives voice to Abrams in the epigraph to his collection – and Abrams was the American editor who had the connections that made the Norton edition possible. But it has been a long time since *The Prelude* was hailed, by Abrams, as the ‘exemplary’ text of British Romanticism, and Wordsworth’s greatest poem is in danger of becoming something of a sacred cow, a fetish even, of the spilt religion of Romanticism – not something that Wordsworth ever intended it to be. Central to the beliefs of that religion is a dogma based on interpretations of Coleridge’s definitions of the primary and secondary Imagination, as defined by the later disciples of that religion. They do not speak on behalf of Wordsworth, the ‘Prophet of Nature’.

John Cole
University of Auckland