

when India was in flames), whether the Matelda of Dante's *II Purgatorio* was or was not the 'Great Countess of Tuscany' (Letter no. 274, 2 September 1859), on the *Accademia degli Intronati* in Siena during the cinquecento (Letter no. 295, 3 April 1861), on the ancient milking of ewes (Letter no. 327, 13 November 1862). The learning is encyclopedic, his array of authorities devastating. To the end he defended the honour of Harriet Westbrook, attacking Thomas Medwin's 1847 *Life of P. B. Shelley* in 1862 as 'abounding with inaccuracies, misapprehensions and errors' and evoking a bitter riposte from Thomas Medwin for raking up 'the unfortunate history of Shelley's love affairs, which I can only attribute to your Cockney love of gossip — your catering to the worst passions of the Public — Who ever in Shakespeares or Miltons days ever cared about Mrs S or Mrs M?'.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to an eighty-page introduction, which digests Peacock's life and achievement, there is an excellent index, and the book is produced in the impeccable tradition of the Clarendon Press.

Roderick Cavaliero

*British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind.* By Alan Richardson Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, vol. 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xx + 243 pp. ISBN 0 521 78191 4. £37.50.

*The Text of Shelley's Death.* By Alan Halsey (Sheffield: West House Books, 2001), 84 pp. ISBN 0 904052 00 2. £8.95.

As we might expect from the forty-seventh volume in the Cambridge Studies in Romanticism series, Alan Richardson's *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* is an authoritative and extensively annotated study of its subject.

Richardson's book sets out to argue that the pioneering British neuroscience of the 1790s until around 1830 helped manifest the Romantic character, whilst literary Romanticism intersected in numerous significant ways with the physiological psychology of the time. 'Only in the Romantic era', he says in his Introduction, 'was the brain definitively established as the organ of thought'. But despite this, most commentary on literature and the Romantic mind continues to be informed by disembodied versions of associationism and epistemological issues, leaving the brain out of the picture. Richardson convincingly explores and makes a case for a more physical and brain-oriented study of 'Neural Romanticism'.

This leads to many interesting departures from the more conventional views of Romantic poetry. Thus, the chapter 'Coleridge and the new unconscious' quickly moves on from transcendental readings of *Kubla Khan* towards a view of that 'psychological curiosity' as the product of a material brain-mind. Likewise, 'A beating mind: Wordsworth and the science of feelings' builds upon the image of its subject as a poet attuned to the new biological psychology of Cabanis and Erasmus Darwin.

<sup>6</sup> Medwin to Peacock, 6 September 1872, p. 465.

Rather surprisingly, Mary and Percy Shelley have no chapter to themselves, and feature only occasionally throughout the book. Richardson nevertheless raises some new points relating to innate and instinctive aspects of the creature's mind in *Frankenstein*, and also suggests two new names as possible candidates for the influential 'physiological writers of Germany' referred to in the 1818 Preface of Mary Shelley's novel.

The fifth chapter, 'Keats and the glories of the brain', convincingly dispels the received image of that poet as one who dreamed his way through medical lectures at Guy's hospital. Instead we look at the poetry of a serious and attentive student, who passed his Apothecaries Licentiate examination at the earliest possible age, and who had an abiding interest in contemporary teaching on the brain and nerves. Thus, passages from works such as the *Fall of Hyperion* and *Ode to Psyche* are reassessed from the point of view of anatomy lessons he attended, with the 'wild-ridged mountains' of the latter poem recalling the convolutions of the exposed cerebral cortex.

As well as such specifically literary considerations, this book also makes a significant contribution to our further understanding of the history of medical science. Richardson helps to push further back the origins of modern physio-psychological theory, raising the profile of Romantic-era thought and work as an important antecedent of the developments of the later nineteenth century. As such, it is a welcome addition to the growing canon of publications on art and the sciences.

In the quirky sort of way that books produced by small presses can sometimes be, *The Text of Shelley's Death* is itself an interesting artefact, being the published version of a work that was originally hand-printed in two limited editions in 1995. But I doubt if this rather strange publication will be of much interest or use to the wider market at which this edition is presumably aimed.

To begin with, the title is somewhat misleading; the singular *Text* suggesting a unifying analysis of the differing accounts of Percy Shelley's death in the Bay of Lerici in 1822. To use the plural, *Texts*, would more accurately reflect the content, which is described on the back cover as a 'kaleidoscope of voices' which 'collates these variant tellings' and presents them 'using the techniques of the scholarly variorum'. Alan Halsey's textual collage is certainly varied and wide-ranging. Included are excerpts of prose, poetry, literary criticism, historical commentary, and entries from diaries and journals relating to Percy Shelley's death. These are gleaned from sources ranging from Percy Shelley himself and contemporaries such as Mary Shelley, Byron and Trelawny, through early biographers such as Dowden and Rossetti, to modern critics such as Donald Reiman and Nora Crook. But 'scholarly' is hardly a word I would apply to this collection.

The textual excerpts concerned are all unattributed and untitled, and seemingly follow one another at random. Other than a bibliography at the end (containing no page cross-references), the book lacks any list of contents or an index, and there is no notation, commentary, or explanatory material of any kind to indicate the authorship or significance of what one has been reading. This raises the question as to the type of



reader for which this book is intended. Experienced Shelleyans will probably recognise most of the excerpts (and already be familiar with their source texts), but are likely to find the false mystery of their anonymity irritating. Those new to the poet will, I suspect, be no less frustrated by the book's essential uselessness as a resource.

In a quotation from Paul Merchant cited on the back cover, Halsey's book is nevertheless praised as 'a contribution to scholarship', and its style hailed as being 'Romantic ... fragmentary ... deconstructed' and one of 'Shelleyan confusion'. Merchant presumably defends the purposefully fragmentary and anonymous structure of the book on the grounds that this was a conceit employed by some Romantic writers. However, one cannot help but wonder what purpose is served by any present-day textual collection aping a generic style associated with its subject. Should books criticising opera have their texts set to a musical score? Might we expect a book on nihilism to consist of blank pages? Moreover, to praise this particular book for being 'deconstructive' merely underlines one's worst fears that the postmodern world view adds nothing to our knowledge of any subject and tends only to confuse what we already know. Perhaps the adjacent quotation from Robert Nye is nearer the mark, which describes the book as 'sometimes baffling'.

Inserted near the end is a section entitled 'Towards an Index of Shelley's Death', which is not an index but a quasi-poetic alphabetic arrangement of Shelleyan phrases. Rather than tinkering with the unacknowledged work of others, it would have been better if Halsey had allowed the original authorial voices to speak for themselves.

Christopher Goulding

*Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790–1830*, By Jane Stabler. Transitions. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), xiv + 322 pp. ISBN 0-333-69625-5. £14.50

According to its general editor, Julian Wolfreys, the purpose of this series is 'to demonstrate how the literature is always open to transition, whether in the instant of its production or in succeeding moments of its critical reception'. True to this brief, Stabler's guide to Romanticism offers a largely historicist perspective on the period while also attempting to draw attention to changes within Romantic scholarship. Although the organisational principles suggested by the title might seem rather alarming, the text is at its most successful in offering comparative analysis of canonical and uncanonical figures. From the introduction and Stabler's brief discussion of shifting attitudes to the aesthetic tendencies of women's writing, students should also gain at least a superficial sense of the broader changes in Romantic scholarship, although relatively little attention is given to the reasons for these changes.

Opening with a discussion of the Gothic and the developing patterns of political imagery that surrounded it, Stabler signals her historicist intentions as well as her determination to reflect the widening romantic canon. Her chapter on Romantic drama likewise suggests the extending range of critical preoccupations. She touches rapidly, for example, on the politics of the gaze (Mary Robinson); the 'mental theatre'

of Baillie and Byron; the mediation of subversive desire and sentiment in Inchbald's translation of Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows* (1798); and transitions in audience taste.

The chapter on Romantic poetry is similarly wide-ranging, providing a series of rapid sketches connected by the flexible notion of 'transition'. Contemporary discussion of transitional passages in poetry forms a convenient starting point and Stabler spends some time examining this aesthetic debate before moving on to association and the sense of social change in Wordsworth and Keats. A brief account of critical tensions leading to increased interest in women's poetry of the period is followed by a stronger reading of Barbauld and Coleridge. Stabler corrects the assumption that Barbauld is a representative of the prosaic side of Unitarianism, confined to a supposedly feminine detail while Coleridge soars to greater metaphysical heights. She is right to comment on Stuart Curran's over-gendering of the 'Mouse's Petition' and her recognition of the importance in the poem not just of gender but of the 'tension between the principles of personal interest and public good', arguably the central intellectual issue of the day, is applicable to much women's writing of the period (p. 125).

Her examination of the Romantic novel and non-fictional prose also reflects the importance of this debate over the relation between individual and community. It begins with a discussion in the political pamphlets of the 1790s before using Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft to show the importance of the issue to the lower ranks and women. Stabler then provides a quick rebuttal of the outdated notion of the non-political 'gentle Jane', although, perhaps due to lack of space, the reading lacks a sense of Austen's lightness of touch. For example, while Stabler's point about the importance of social responsibility to Austen is clear, it appears reductive to say that it is 'literally true' that Elizabeth falls in love with Darcy as a result of seeing Pemberley (p. 196).

None the less, Stabler has captured some of the political urgency of the period and in her final chapter, '1830: Time for Change', she shows a literature reflective of a growing unease with political stagnation. Although at times this study is almost too wide-ranging, it should give the student an awareness of the major issues of interest. Containing a chronology of the period and a glossary of key concepts and contexts, it is an accessible and affordable introduction to Romanticism.

Fiona Price

*John Keats: The Major Works*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xxxvi + 667 pp. £9.99.

*The Cambridge Companion to Keats*. Edited by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xliii + 272 pp. ISBN 0-521-65839-X. £14.06.

*How to Study Romantic Poetry*. Second edition (Macmillan Study Guides: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), ix + 152 pp. ISBN 0-333-92976-4. £11.50.

Elizabeth Cook has compiled a fairly inclusive World's Classics edition of Keats, reprinted from the authoritative Oxford Authors series. Room has been saved by