

Two recent collections of essays, Christoph Bode’s and Katharina Rennhak’s *Romantic Voices, Romantic Poetics* and Larry H. Peer’s and Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Romanticism*, seek new views of Romanticism, its authors, and its texts. Both volumes present a wide range of studies covering traditionally canonical writers such as Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as well as authors from Romanticism’s expanding canon such as Charlotte Smith, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, and Maria Edgeworth. In their diversity, both texts demonstrate that Romantic ideas and ideals cross both geographical and chronological boundaries.

In the introduction to *Romantic Voices, Romantic Poetics*, Bode writes that Romantic poetry and the Romantic voice frequently emphasize both a sense of immediacy and the newness of an experience. At the same time, however, novelty and immediacy are conveyed through writing, which necessarily requires a separation from the experience. According to Bode, the essay collection explores this paradox and considers the question, “How can immediacy be mediated?” (14). Anthony John Harding highlights the importance of this question in “Rehabilitating Romantic Poetic Voice.” In the essay, Harding explores the connection between the poet and his or her culture. Following a critique of new historicist and deconstructionist readings of Romanticism, Harding asserts that poetic voice must play a part in literary interpretation because the poetic voice of any text was also in dialogue with cultural thoughts on politics, nature, and the past. The essays which make up the rest of the volume explore the ways in which Romantic poets and their texts speak to, about, and against the culture from which each emerged.

Angela Esterhammer’s “Romantic Curses” foregrounds the importance of speech in Romantic texts. Using William Blake’s *Tiriel* as a starting point, Esterhammer further considers passages from Friedrich Hölderlin’s *Der Tod des Empedokles* and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* to argue that in Romantic drama, curses both express and enact the identity of the curse speaker. Because curses “speak subject positions and relationships into existence” (21), Esterhammer convincingly articulates, they construct the speaker’s identity by defining it against the Other. Where Esterhammer shows how dramatic language creates individual identity, Ute Berns’s “Politics of Revolution” explores how *Death’s Jest Book*, a Romantic drama by Thomas Lovell Beddoes, reflects the destruction of cultural identity. Berns reads the play as an allegory of the French Revolution that highlights the importance of *fraternité* through
themes of friendship and revenge. Berns ably traces similarities between the Roman setting of the play and aspects of the French Revolution to conclude that the play reveals how revolution and revenge produce a loss of friendship and the disintegration of cultural values.

Romantic drama is further considered in Kai Merten’s “Plays on the Essential Passions of Men,” which examines Romantic drama and contrasts the genre to Wordsworth’s poetic goals. Both Adam Smith and Joanna Baillie, Merten states, view theater as fragmented. She adds that although Baillie and Smith recognize the relationship between actor and audience, each remains separated from the other because their experiences as player and spectator differ during performance. Because Wordsworth interacts with the characters that he writes, as in “Simon Lee” and “The Old Cumberland Beggar,” Merten claims, Wordsworth collapses the distance between poet and audience; he becomes both the observer and the observed. Another essay on Wordsworth investigates the creative power of Wordsworth’s poetic voice. In “Self-consciousness in Wordsworth’s The Prelude,” Monika Class reads Wordsworth’s poem as a text that creates the self through memory. Merten and Class both assert that Wordsworth’s poetry forms his identity; Class offers the additional argument that the poetry also recreates the world in which he lived.

Jens Martin Gurr’s “Morality versus Poetics” offers an explanation for the perceived drop in the quality of Wordsworth’s verse as his career progressed. Gurr suggests that The Prelude shows Wordsworth’s reliance on Nature for inspiration, and that in the poem, Wordsworth “closely associates periods of moral, spiritual and creative integrity” with the natural world (58). As he grew older, Wordsworth’s intensified religious devotion led him to increased skepticism regarding the force of Nature. As a result, Gurr contends, because he came to view nature with less passion, Wordsworth’s verse suffered from a lack of inspiration. Naji Oueijan also examines The Prelude and compares passages on the Orient in Book V to Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” and Percy Shelley’s “Alastor.” Oueijan points out that for these three poets, the East represented a new realm that could be explored without imaginative boundaries. This lack of limitation, Oueijan indicates, allows Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley to contemplate the paradoxes of “logic with spiritualism, reality with romance, and order with spontaneity” (180).

Heike Grundmann’s essay, “Living Words,” also looks at paradox in Coleridge’s poetry. Drawing on Kant’s theories of teleology, Grundmann states that Coleridge views language itself as natural. Grundmann also claims that Coleridge views language as a divine gift and that as such, for Coleridge, language is both eternal and ever-changing, and it bridges the gap between God and humanity. “Between Hoax and Ideology” further underscores ideas of unification in Coleridge’s work. In the essay, Martin Procházka writes that Coleridge’s poetry synthesizes disparate ideas into unities. Procházka contrasts this idea with theories by German thinkers, including Schlegel and Kant, who emphasize the destabilization of unities. A final consideration of Coleridge and unity occurs in Christoph Reinfandt’s “World and Voice,” where the author interprets two versions of Coleridge’s “Hymn to Sunrise” and speculates that, in the later version, “subjectivity fashions the world in its own image” (76); that is, the poet’s vision unites the physical world with personal experience, with the latter eventually subsuming the former. Reinfandt then contrasts Coleridge’s poem with Shelley’s “Mont Blanc,” which represents an interaction between the poet’s mind and the physical world.

Where Reinfandt focuses on the poet and the physical world, Rosa Karl scrutinizes the relationship between poet and reader in “The Powers of Metaphor and
Self-Divestment.” Drawing from Shelley’s *Defense of Poetry*, Karl states that while Shelley aspires to connect to readers, he believes that an empathetic link to readers is an unattainable ideal. Because Keats viewed poetry as a place where all ideas may be explored but none affirmed, Karl contends that for Keats, empathy between poet and reader is possible. Mark J. Braun also considers Shelley and Keats, though he shifts attention to poetic influence. Braun delineates the difference between the two poets by focusing on the use of images. Drawing on the letters of Lord Byron and Shelley, Braun specifies how Keats was criticized for an overabundance of images, primarily because this style conflicted with the poetic ideals of Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*. Braun then tracks how Shelley’s *Defense of Poetry* accommodates and diverges from Pope’s text, concluding that while Keats was censured during his life, the privilege he gave to the image – on description over ideas – has a greater impact on contemporary poetry than Pope, Shelley, or Lord Byron.

Byron, along with Robert Burns, are the subjects of Shona M. Allan’s “Ghostly Voices,” which parallels the two poets’ treatments of supernatural occurrences. Allan highlights the digressions of Burns’s *Tam o’Shanter* and contends that the title character’s encounters with witches, warlocks, and the devil display a skepticism of supernatural events. Allan compares these scenes with Canto XVI of *Don Juan*, which recounts a fictional interaction with a ghost. For Allan, the work of Burns and Byron reveals Romantic uncertainty toward supernatural beings.

Skepticism, to understate the matter, forms the basis of Norbert Lennartz’s “Apocalyptic Voices,” an essay which situates Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* against mainstream Romanticism. While acknowledging autobiographical criticism of the novel, Lennartz maintains that *The Last Man* “voices the idea of decay and finality, thus contributing ... to the radical deconstruction of Romanticism and its paradigms” (167). Lennartz carefully demonstrates that Shelley’s apocalyptic and fatalistic vision of humanity questions the optimistic work of poets such as Wordsworth and Percy Shelley.

Nicholas Roe’s “Leigh Hunt’s *Juvenilia*” considers the optimism surrounding the publication of Hunt’s first volume of poetry with a particular focus on the list of subscribers in the volume. Roe states that although the volume announces the arrival of a new literary talent, the list of subscribers as well as the content of some poems – in particular *The Palace of Pleasure*, the volume’s last poem – both look back to the difficulties of Hunt’s childhood and foreshadow the difficulties of his later life.

The final essay, Michael O’Neill’s “The All Sustaining Air,” brings the collection full circle as it returns to Percy Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* to consider its influence. O’Neill explains how the experience of the sublime in the play “links Romantic poems with many poems of a later climate” (200). O’Neill concentrates on images of air and breath in Shelley, William Butler Yeats, and Wallace Stevens before connecting Shelley to other poets such as Adrienne Rich and Elizabeth Bishop. In this concluding essay, as in the entire volume, the ideas of Romanticism are discussed both for their import in the early nineteenth century as well as for the ways they continue a dialogue with contemporary times.
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Revisionist Discourse.” In the introduction, the editors state the volume explores both “discourses of Romanticism and discourses on Romanticism” (3). Drawing on Foucault’s theories, Peer and Hoeveler write that the volume examines the bifurcated nature of literary texts that are simultaneously opposed to and complicit in structures of power (3). Throughout, the volume highlights the diversity of Romantic voices, especially those in non-canonical works, and the ways in which they have and have not been heard.

The first section of the volume, “Language and Romantic Discourse Systems,” presents four wide-ranging essays on the function of language in different genres. Diane Long Hoeveler’s and Sarah Davies Cordova’s “Gothic Opera as Romantic Discourse in Britain and France” defines the genre of rescue opera as one featuring unjust imprisonment followed by subsequent rescue. They argue that rescue operas were popular because they offered a sentimental vision of the past while simultaneously challenging contemporary government by presenting “a political and social warning to the monarchy” (12). By examining and contrasting specific operas from France and England, Hoeveler and Cordova define, clearly and concisely, the rescue opera genre and create a map for further study of Romantic opera. Marjean D. Purinton continues the discussion of the Romantic Stage in “Romantic Drama and the Discourse of Criminality.” Here, Purinton utilizes Jeremy Bentham’s theories on punishment as a lens through which to view three late eighteenth-century plays: Robert Jephson’s Law of Lombardy, Frances Burney’s Edwy and Elgiva, and James Boaden’s Secret Tribunal. By examining the public and private punishments that occur in these plays, Purinton demonstrates the Romantic fascination with criminality, retribution, and spectacle.

While Purinton considers the dichotomy of public/private in relation to punishment, in “Half Asleep on Thresholds,” Onita Vaz examines these same two terms in relation to poetic creation. Vaz posits that Coleridge’s poem “Fears in Solitude” highlights the paradoxical situation whereby a poet needs isolation to create poetry but that some outside stimuli are needed to spark the imagination. After a discussion of how the poem addresses concern over the French Revolution as well as artistic production, Vaz suggests that Coleridge oscillates between lyrical and political rhetoric and that the poem represents not a synthesis of opposites but rather a balancing of contrary qualities (66).

Richard Nanian’s “Pursuing the Plerotic Sublime” proposes a new discourse system for understanding Romantic poetry. Drawing on the work of Elizabeth Sewell in The Structure of Poetry, Nanian proposes that texts should be read “as energy rather than as artifact” (49), where poetry exists on a continuum and approaches either “a condition of maximum or minimum reference” (38). Nanian further applies this theory to William Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” Coleridge’s “Christabel,” and Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes” to show the failure of language to describe sublime experiences; as a result, these poets resort to layers of imagery to articulate what is unspeakable. Nanian concludes with the provocative suggestion that Romantic poetry tends toward the plerotic sublime; that is, Romantic poets and poetry attempt to describe sublime experience through an overabundance of images.

The ideas of authority highlighted in the essays by Hoeveler and Cordova and Purinton are renewed in the five essays that comprise the second section of the volume, “Women Writers and Romantic Constructions of Power.” The essays in this section all examine a text in discourse with Romantic cultural currents to produce innovative...
interpretations of these works that express either women’s inability to escape patriarchal oppression or women’s attempts to subvert that power. In “The Second Soul-less Sex,” Carolyn A. Weber examines the use of Mary Wollstonecraft’s term “Mahometan” in *The Rights of Women*, and claims that Wollstonecraft links those oppressed by the East India Company with women in England. Weber focuses on the trial of Warren Hastings as an instance where poor treatment of those in India and Bengal entered public consciousness and believes that Wollstonecraft uses the term “Mahometan” to suggest that British women are oppressed just as the Indians and Bengalese are.

Jeffrey Cass reads a similar subjection of women in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*. Cass begins by countering the interpretation of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Gilbert and Gubar view *Belinda* in light of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and maintain that both present misogynist stereotypes. Cass, however, counters these assertions and states that Milton privileges Eve and that Edgeworth criticizes patriarchal structures. Cass successfully demonstrates that, like Milton’s Satan, the men in *Belinda* often use charm to mask their true intentions and to fool women; as a result these presentations show women at the mercy of the patriarchy. Nancy Metzger also traces the confinement of women in her consideration of Charlotte Smith’s *Old Manor House*. Drawing on Gaston Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, Metzger deftly contrasts the interior and exterior settings of Smith’s novel. Through a careful consideration of the doors, windows, and caskets of *The Old Manor House*, Metzger takes issue with Bachelard’s conservative view of the safe haven of domestic space by showing how these spaces could imprison nineteenth-century women.

The remaining two essays in this section trace women’s attempts to escape or subvert the patriarchal confinement considered in the previous three essays. In “Parting Songs,” Kari Lokke traces the influence of Friederike Brun’s poem “Ich denke Dein,” on female British poets, notably Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Letitia Landon, and Felicia Hemans. Lokke demonstrates that in “A Parting Song” and “Night at Sea,” both Hemans and Landon, respectively, use the poem’s refrain of “I think of you” to transform the relationship from that of two lovers to a relationship between the poet and readers. Lokke also delineates how Browning responds to Landon by using the same line to create an image of a Christ-like figure who also stands as both female poet and universal authority. Larry H. Peer corrects critical dismissal of Anne Brontë’s *Agnes Grey* and convincingly argues for a revaluation of the novel as a *Bildungsroman* in the German tradition. Peer stresses that Agnes Grey’s primary growth as a character is internal and specifically spiritual, as she recognizes “what the faith she has been brought up with truly means” (146). By tracing natural descriptions in the novel, Peer demonstrates that Brontë reflects Agnes Grey’s mental maturity through natural surroundings, which in turn links the novel to Romanticism.

The final section of the volume considers “Varieties of Revisionist Discourse.” These four essays cover perhaps the greatest diversity of writers of any of the three parts, but they are linked through their focus on revision, whether it is a writer’s own revisions or seeing a subject from a new vantage point. Both Rodney Farnsworth and Sonja E. Klocke take the second approach as they revisit the work of Charles-Maurice de Tallyrand-Périgord and Wilhelm Wackenroder. Farnsworth reads Tallyrand’s desires for unity in European politics and his optimism regarding the new challenges of the future as originating from Romantic ideals. Farnsworth indicates that because of a physical deformity, Tallyrand was demonized and cast as the Other, another Romantic characteristic. Farnsworth concludes that most of all, Tallyrand’s commitment to
finding practical solutions to radical political shifts marks him as a Romantic individual. Klocke views Wackenroder’s *Confessions from the Heart of an Art-loving Friar* through a Freudian lens to argue that its protagonist, Joseph Berlinger, is a “typical Romantic artist” whose life “is determined by an unsolved oedipal conflict” (192). Klocke then notes that, along with his desire to create art and aggrandize himself, Berlinger’s oppressive father and lack of a mother causes an absence of love in his life and an inability to create meaningful art.

Byron’s efforts to create meaningful art in *Manfred* are clarified in D.L. Macdonald’s “Byron and *Manfred*.” Macdonald studies Byron’s journal of an 1816 Alpine trip and the ways it informs Byron’s drama, asserting that revisions from the journal to the play demonstrate a movement from Romantic Irony to Romantic Ideology (182). For example, Macdonald shows that *Manfred* has a greater number of references to the self and that the self depicted in *Manfred* is more conflicted than in the journal. These differences, Macdonald states, indicate the self-division and narcissism characteristic to Romantic works.

While Macdonald explores the history of *Manfred*’s creation, Bonnie J. Guzenhauser’s “Readerly Agency and the Discourse of History in *The Antiquary*” examines the creation of history as depicted in Walter Scott’s novel. Drawing on Scott’s own participation in the Bannatyne Club, an organization of Scottish historians, Guzenhauser argues that in *The Antiquary*, Scott privileges local historical record over national, often agenda-driven, efforts to create history. Guzenhauser reads Jonathan Oldbuck as representative of partisan national history while Edie Ochiltree serves as a local historian of Fairport. Guzenhauser illustrates that while both characters propose their own interpretations of the historical landscape, Ochiltree possesses more accurate knowledge throughout the novel.

Guzenhauser’s essay suggests, among other things, that while national or standardized views of history may exist, local or fresh perspectives often bring light and new understanding to historical subjects. The essays in *Romantic Voices, Romantic Poetics* and *Romanticism: Comparative Discourses* offer such new views. These essays, in their wide-ranging subjects, diverse approaches, and original ideas open new avenues of exploration and increase understanding of Romanticism and its texts.

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*Blake, Nation, and Empire* comprises papers originally presented at a conference on that topic at the Tate Britain Museum in 2000. These contributions cover a very wide area, including sexuality, economics, history, religion and book design, but what they share is a concern with Blake’s relation to his own society, and in some instances the relation of later nineteenth-century society to Blake. The former is the concern of the first essay “Immortal Joy: William Blake and the Cultural Politics of Empire” by
Saree Makdisi, the main thrust of which is difference and universality in relation to each other. Makdisi emphasizes the middle-class nature of 1790s radicalism, and in contrast with scholars who have stressed the similarities between Blake’s views and those of the Joseph Johnson circle, he stresses the differences between them. He further suggests that Blake’s “systematic avoidance of exoticism” (35) indicates a freedom from the patronizing (conscious or unconscious) attitudes of even his best-intentioned contemporaries, and he finely contrasts “the political aesthetics of empire” (emphasizing “the dialectics of otherness”) with Blake’s goal, which is “the resurrection of differences” (29). This stimulating and provocative essay would call for more detailed consideration here were it not that, as the author notes, “a longer and much more elaborate version” of it was published in his Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s in 2003, a book that has been widely reviewed (see Lussier).

David Worrall’s “Thel in Africa: William Blake and the Post-Colonial, Post-Swedenborgian Female Subject” also has to do with the very late eighteenth century. Its argument is that The Book of Thel is deeply engaged with Swedenborgianism and the project, originally conceived by Swedenborgians, of founding Sierra Leone as a community in which both blacks and whites could live. Worrall gives a very full account of the latter, arguing convincingly that Blake must have been aware of this venture through contacts he made at the Organizing Conference of the New Jerusalem Church in April 1789. Material from both Swedenborg’s own writings and those of Carl Bernhard Wadström, one of the moving figures of the Sierra Leone plan, is introduced to show how conjugal relations in the new colony were conceived before the undertaking was broadened and secularized. Sexual relations between husband and wife were to be frequent, and under special circumstances concubinage would be allowable. It is Worrall’s view that in The Book of Thel Thel’s refusal to enter the lower world is in reaction to these ideas. Yet Thel’s speech on the last page of the text ending “Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy! / Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?” (6: 19, E 6), is hardly the prelude to a flight from the connubial practices of any particular community. It is the body and its restrictions to which Thel responds to with horror, and the England of 1789 would serve as well as Sierra Leone for this. Yet Worrall takes that-which-is-to-be-proved and uses it as an assumption on which to base further assumptions. He states that “while there is much to suggest that several aspects of Swedenborg’s visualization of conjugal love was attractive to Blake, he immediately saw its basic flaw as being its lack of incorporation of women” (52). How do we know that Blake immediately saw this? And how do we know that the establishment of a New Jerusalem Church “would only have served to materialize Blake’s doubts about how it envisaged the role of women” (53)? Here we seem to return to an idealized Blake whose views we can imagine as being very like our own, rather than the “Dangerous Blake” (the expression is W.J.T. Mitchell’s) who confounds us at every turn.

Dr. John Brown, whose theory on the circulation of the blood had been adapted and promulgated by Coleridge’s friend Dr. Thomas Beddoes, is the significant figure in John Mee’s “Bloody Blake: Nation and Circulation.” Brown’s Elements of Medicine was published in a new edition, with a frontispiece engraved by Blake, by Joseph Johnson in May 1795. Mee proposes that Brown’s “cardiovascular language of circulation” is reflected in the first five plates of The Books of Urizen. Mee knows, of course, that Urizen is dated 1794, but he nevertheless suggests that “the two projects may have overlapped” (75). As Brown’s book was originally published in 1788, this theory of overlap need not be accepted for the reader to believe that Blake
may well have read it, and may have been impressed by Brown’s emphasis on the role of stimulation in the treatment of disease, as well as what he was bound to have heard of Brown’s unorthodox behavior and language. Mee’s essay shows Brown as an interesting figure in his own right, as well as a possible presence in Blake’s mental universe. It also calls attention to Joseph Johnson’s often overlooked role as a major scientific publisher.

In her perceptive and engaging “Blake, Hayley, and the History of Sexuality,” Susan Matthews begins with the sexual encounter in the “Preludium” to America:

“The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire; / Round the terrific loins he siez’d the panting struggling womb; / It joy’d: she put aside her clouds & smiled her first-born smile” (2: 2–4, E 52). Many readers have been troubled by the connection between violence and sex in this passage, especially since the Shadowy Female’s smile may lend itself to the belief that some women really want to be raped. However, what is literally going on in the text is more problematic, as Matthews points out in mentioning that the Female finds her voice only after the sexual encounter, and that her ensuing cry is characterized as “virgin.” This leads to a discussion of the changing meanings of “rape” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the course of which it became a crime against person rather than against somebody’s property. Perhaps the most interesting part of this essay is Matthews’s consideration of William Hayley’s Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids, first published anonymously in 1785. As Matthews suggests, Hayley’s satirical essay provides interesting parallels with Blake’s views, as when Hayley writes “A frame of glowing sensibility requires a proper field for the exercise and expansion of all its general affections, and when this is denied to it, such obstruction will sometimes occasion the very worst of evils, a sort of stagnation both in heart and soul” (91). Could such passages in the Essay on Old Maids, one wonders, be reflected in Blake’s Notebook lines:

An old maid early e’er I knew  
Ought but the love that on me grew  
And now I’m coverd o’er & o’er  
And wish that I had been a Whore (E 474)

A long quotation from Northrop Frye precedes James Chandler’s essay, “Blake and the Syntax of Sentiment: An Essay on ‘Blaking’ Understanding.” It was Frye who first defined the “Age of Sensibility,” and Chandler wishes to follow this thread into Blake’s relation to the culture of Sensibility in the late eighteenth century. In order to do this he engages Adam Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments, the importance of which to the poets of the later eighteenth century is often not fully realized. Chandler points out that, rather than meaning feeling what another person feels, by sympathy Smith means feeling what we would feel in the other person’s situation. Chandler gives some relevant examples of how Blake in his annotation to Boyd’s Dante substitutes feeling for rational or moral judgment. Chandler is not, of course, arguing for a sentimental Blake; for example, he asserts that “The Mental Traveler” is a poem in which “the movement is between contradictory feelings that somehow beget each other” (111). It is evident how the back-and-forthing of this poem supports such a view, less so when Chandler, following John Brenkman, argues that “A Poison Tree” has two different meanings “which prove on analysis to be mutually exclusive” (108). Nevertheless, Chandler’s essay makes us aware of an important aspect of Blake’s poetic sensibility.
Morris Eaves declares that Blake’s *Prospectus* of 1793 “gains in interest when considered in the light of the *Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery.” The status of the *Prospectus* as a document is curious; it is not known to exist in its original form, owing its survival as a text to its being reprinted in the Gilchrist *Life*, yet it is one of our most important sources of knowledge of Blake in the early 1790s (as well as being, Eaves points out, the sole source of the term “Illuminated Books”). It lists ten works for sale, all of which were, with one exception – the small book of engravings of subjects from the history of England – produced. The others comprise six illuminated books, the engraved *Gates of Paradise*, and two separate plates, none created earlier than 1789. It is an amazing testament to Blake’s productivity. In “National Arts and Disruptive Technologies in Blake’s *Prospectus* of 1793,” Eaves places Blake’s enterprise in relation to Reynolds’s postulation of a cultivated public that will result not only in the better appreciation of pictures but in the commissioning of them, and to Boydell’s system of commissioning paintings, hiring engravers to produce plates after them, and marketing the results. All three partake of a new confidence in British art, and all three were mistaken or unsuccessful. Reynolds had in mind a new age of historical painting, but what succeeded was portraiture; Boydell went bankrupt in 1804; and Blake’s high hopes were never realized. However, the success that eluded Blake in life was achieved in his later reception, as evidenced for Eaves by the Tate Britain and Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibitions of 2000–01. Yet even now, Eaves reminds us, Blake’s work is often experienced in what he calls a “disaggregative” way (130), in which word and image are separated or one subordinated to the other. Sometimes he seems to condemn this “cruise-ship tourism,” but at other times takes a more lenient view of the enormous demands Blake makes upon his reader/viewers. In the end Eaves is confident that Blake is now finding the “multitasking audience” that he requires.

Christopher Hobson takes as part of his title a well-known, stirring marginal note by Blake: “‘What Is Liberty Without Universal Toleration’: Blake, Homosexuality, and the Cooperative Commonwealth.” Did Blake mean this statement to apply to the rights of homosexuals? Hobson argues that Blake must have been aware of the arrest and trial of the “Vere-Street monsters” in 1810–11, which resulted in the hanging of two of the convicted and the pillorying of six others. Hobson is too sensible a scholar to suggest a one-on-one correspondence between these events and those of Blake’s illuminated books, but he does make a strong case for an increase in homoerotic situations in Blake’s works around this time. Undeniably one example is the episode in *Milton* in which Leutha tells how she “stupefied the masculine perceptions” of Satan “And kept only the feminine awake.” To take this a bit further, we might construe the ensuing expulsion of Leutha by Satan as a compensation for his fear of his own homosexuality. (S. Foster Damon’s suggestion that Blake sensed homosexuality in Hayley could reinforce this interpretation.) As Hobson recognizes, the Leutha episode could be used to infer either condemnation or its opposite, but the important thing is that it represents a “far-reaching and, for its time, unconventional … understanding of psychodynamics” (140). In *Jerusalem* Hobson concentrates on what he aptly calls the “riverbank encounter” between Jerusalem and Vala, which he takes to be “a frank depiction of lesbian relations” (142). However, the two females “assimilating in one” may, alternatively, refer to a golden phase before sexual differentiation. Also, although Hobson brings in as a parallel Blake’s plate 28 depiction of two figures embracing on a lily, he does not discuss the change that was made in this design so that, as David Erdman observed, the legs of one of the figures were shifted
from a position in which they could be assumed to be copulating to one in which they could not. Nevertheless, Albion’s jealous rending of Vala’s veil is presented as an act of phallic aggression, and it certainly does contrast with, in Hobson’s words, the “mutual, equal, noncoercive” situation that precedes it. This stimulating essay makes us consider and reconsider questions like what Albion actually may mean by “unnatural consanguinities and friendships / Horrid to think of when enquired deeply into” (146).

In Andrew Lincoln’s “Restoring the Nation to Christianity: Blake and the Aftermyth of Revolution” we are presented with some parallels between Blake’s views and those advanced by nineteenth-century Christian counter-revolutionaries. Lincoln suggests an almost metaphorical relationship between them when he says, “Blake began to shadow and transform the conservative reaction to revolution in his later works” (156). As Lincoln understands, this did not make Blake any less a radical, though a different kind of radical from the one whose “Vala or The Four Zoas appears to shadow and transform progressive Enlightenment views that were identified as a cause of the revolution.” Lincoln also recognizes that Blake’s new view of Christian institutions as unknowingly protecting spiritual vision is very different from embracing the systems of belief promulgated by those institutions. In the course of discussing Milton Lincoln also gives the most convincing resolution to date of the seeming paradox of having predestination and free will operate concurrently in the poem. One might add that there is a wide gulf between a Christianity founded on personal experience like Blake’s and the Christianity of received dogma. That is why Blake identified with Whitfield and Wesley, and their doctrine of a New Birth.

In “Jerusalem as Imperial Prophecy” Steve Clark argues a closer relationship between Blake and the forces of Christian reaction. He should be credited for approaching a subject that has largely been left in embarrassed silence: Blake’s often harsh words for Jews and their religion, and his denigration of Catholicism if not of Catholics. Some of these slurs are conversionary in nature, while others are directed at the Jews as a people. The Jew called upon to “leave counting gold!” in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (E 44) and the Jew who can “be mistook” for a pig in The Everlasting Gospel are among the sorry examples that Clark cites, but whether Blake’s denunciation of the “Jewish Imposture” gives him anything in common with the London Missionary Society, as Clarke suggests, is another matter. We should remember that Blake belonged to no church, considered the Christianity of his time as fatally flawed, and thought contemporary Christians worshipped “the Dead Corpse” of Jesus (Gates of Paradise, E 259). Nor is there anything specifically anti-Catholic in Los’s commanding his Spectre to “overthrow their cup, / Their bread, their altar table, their incense and their oath” (Jerusalem 91: 12–5, E 251). This would apply as much to high church Anglicism as to Catholicism. Clark also adduces Blake’s reported presence in the Gordon No-Popery Riots of 1780. Although Alexander Gilchrist says Blake was swept along by the crowd, that is probably because he did not want to present the subject of his biography (1863) as a rioter; how severe Victorian attitudes toward riots were may be seen in Dickens’s Barnaby Rudge (1841) and Charles Kingsley’s Alton Locke (1850). Nevertheless, we need not assume that the twelve-year-old Blake was a principled bigot; he may have gone along to see the burning of Newgate Prison, as many others did. Clark rightly cites a list of Churches in Milton – “Paul, Constantine, Charlemagne” – as representing phases of Christianity that culminate in “stages of the absorption of Christianity into secular power” (170), but says nothing of the word following “Charlemagne” – “Luther.” The Protestant
“Church” does not escape Blake’s condemnation. And in all fairness, the remark attributed to Blake that “the Roman Church was the only one which taught the forgiveness of sins” (Bentley, 607n, suggesting that Samuel Palmer was Gilchrist’s source) should at least be mentioned. In all, Clark’s view of Jerusalem as “a high cultural version” of crude circulars opposing Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s is not supported by the evidence.

Jason Whittaker’s subject is an arch-protestant, but the author’s concern is John Milton not as theologian but as a writer of history. In “The Matter of Britain: Blake, Milton, and the Ancient Britons,” Whittaker points out that Blake could have read Milton’s History of Britain in John Toland’s important edition of the Complete Works (1694–8). Whittaker finds the reason for Blake’s interest in Verulam, in addition to Francis Bacon’s having been Lord Verulam, in its importance in Roman Britain as recounted by Milton. It’s also interesting, as Whittaker points out, that the names of all but one of the Daughters of Albion listed in Jerusalem are to be found in Milton’s History. More of a stretch, though an interesting one, is Whittaker’s suggestion that the much-discussed Elynytria-Leutha conflict in Milton derives from Milton’s account of an exchange on the subject of women’s sexual behavior between the Empress Julia and the unnamed wife of the Caledonian chieftain Argentocoxus. Although some of the parallels Whittaker draws are highly tentative, his article makes us more aware of a book that Blake is likely to have known and to have found interesting.

One of Robert N. Essick’s purposes in “Erin, Ireland, and the Emanation in Blake’s Jerusalem” is “to rescue Blake’s later poetry from relative neglect among the new Blake historians, who tend to concentrate on Blake’s writings of the 1790s” (204). After a perspicacious review of the methods of previous historical criticism, Essick concentrates on the figure of Erin, who first appears in Milton and who gives a very long speech at the end of Chapter 2 of Jerusalem. Her manifestation in Blake’s universe in the nineteenth century is surely a result of the Act of Union, passed by Parliament and signed by the king in 1800, and called by Byron in the House of Lords “the union of the shark with its prey.” Erin is thus a female victim, thematically related to Jerusalem herself, and having her own surrogate in Dinah, to marry whom the Hivite Schechem underwent circumcision only to be murdered by her brothers. Dinah is an emanation left without a male counterpart, and this is also the situation of Erin, which in turn reflects the situation of Ireland. As Essick puts it, “The centuries-long conceptualization and reconceptualization of Anglo-Irish relations … ranged between Ireland as conquered colony and Ireland as a fully independent nation” (209). Essick concludes by asserting that the role of Erin shows that the two categories of the contemporary world and syncretic mythology “are not mutually exclusive – indeed neither easily nor productively separated one from another” (211).

The article that fittingly – because it concerns important elements of Blake’s afterfame – closes the book is Joseph Viscomi’s brilliant “Blake after Blake: A Nation Discovers Genius.” Viscomi’s main subject here is W. J. Linton, the artist responsible for the illustrations in Gilchrist’s epochal Life. Viscomi reminds us that very few of Blake’s images had been reproduced before 1863, so that the 116 facsimiles and other reproductions that Linton produced opened up a new world of Blake’s images to Victorian readers. Furthermore, Viscomi remarks, the modes of reproduction are such that “the illustrations duplicate the visual codes of the original medium rather than translate them into another code, like the hatched lines of engraving,” and so “bring the reader closer to the original than conventional reproductions” (217). This involved
several different modes of duplication. Sixteen pages from the Songs were reproduced from electrotypes of Blake’s original plates (except for the title-page of Experience, the origin of which is unknown), as were three of Blake’s illustrations to Thornton’s Virgil from electrotypes of the original wood blocks. For many of the illustrations, Linton implied a technique he had invented: kerography. This involves preparing a copper plate with a black etching ground coated with a layer of white wax, transferring an image onto the wax with an etching needle, and then biting the plate with acid. The new element came after this: a metal cast of the plate was taken and electrotyped for printing. As Linton’s kerography “was best suited to line work and not tone … drawings, relief etching, etchings, and engravings were more easily and successfully reproduced than watercolors and paintings” (242). Thus the public came to know the artist Blake first as a printmaker rather than as a painter. The Job engravings were produced by photolithography, a new technique favored by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who chose it over kerography for this purpose. Viscomi demonstrates Rossetti’s considerable role in decision-making about the reproductions of the Gilchrist Life, largely by drawing on an album of Linton’s entitled Blake: Proofs, Photos, and Tracings (Beinecke Library). The photos, Viscomi suggests, were probably provided by Rossetti, and tracings made and counterproofed for kerographic printing by Linton. In all, this remarkable essay makes us aware of the complexity of the processes employed in the making of the Gilchrist Life.

Like Blake’s relief-etched plates, Blake, Nation and Empire has its mountains and its valleys. However, some overall tendencies can be discerned. One is that for its contributors there is indeed something outside the text, something that helps create the text and that in turn is shaped by it. For some, as Robert Essick (neutrally) puts it “Rather than the privileged author/artist, Blake becomes like one of his mythic characters, a distributed cognitive phenomenon that achieves presence on the margins of unique identity through dialogic interactions within a community” (203). At the same time we see that some of the best scholars writing on Blake today work in the spirit of “the resurrection of differences,” both in this book and in other recent Blake criticism and scholarship.

William Blake was a city-dweller for all but three years of his life, and London is involved in his work in many shapes and forms. It can be threatening in its non-humanness, as in a cancelled plate of America where “Infinite Londons awful spires cast a dreadful cold / Even on rational things beneath” (c: 8), or it can be “a Human awful wonder of God!” (Jerusalem 34: 29[38]), a city with a human voice:

He says: Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee:
My Streets are my, Ideas of Imagination.
Awake Albion, awake! and let us awake up together.
My Houses are Thoughts: my Inhabitants; Affections,
The children of my thoughts, walking within my blood-vessels,
Shut from my nervous form which sleeps upon the verge of Beulah
In dreams of darkness, while my vegetating blood in veiny pipes,
Rolls dreadful thro’ the Furnaces of Los, and the Mills of Satan.
For Albions sake, and for Jerusalem thy Emanation
I give myself, and these my brethren give themselves for Albion. [34: 30–39]

This passage is one of many that indicate the centrality of the city in Blake’s universe. In an era in which many writers thought of London as Cobbett’s “Great Wen,” Blake takes the city as a model of humanity, both collective and individual. He can walk its chartered streets believing that royal charters are limitations of freedom, and he can
see its churches blackening both physically and spiritually, but he can also imagine London as a potential Golgonooza, the city of art.

In her Introduction to *Blake and the City* Jennifer Davis Michael says that “[t]he city for Blake is … an unstable synthesis of human artifact and organic environment, both imaginatively constructed” (10). Its alternative is not the natural world but an “unstable space” that Los labors to model into form. One of his creations is London, the westward growth of which suggested to Blake a possible transformation from what at one point he calls a “City of Assassinations” to “the Spiritual Fourfold London” (*Jerusalem* 53: 18–19). Michael focuses on this urban aspect of Blake’s poetry (her book is not much concerned with his visual art), exploring the many and various roles of the city in four of Blake’s major works: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem*, to each of which she devotes a chapter.

In approaching the *Songs* the author argues that they may be classed as “urban pastoral” because in her view “Blake breaks down the city/country dichotomy” (39). In support of this interesting idea she makes the excellent point that the framing lines that Blake drew in copies W and X make us aware of the status of the etched plates as such, “drawing attention to the created value of this pastoral world” (41). Going further, she attempts to extend the urban element of the *Songs* into what is usually considered the rural. According to Michael, “The Echoing Green,” which most readers imagine as sited on a village green, may equally depict “a London park or suburb” (46). The “Holy Thursday” of *Experience*, “obviously paired with the “Holy Thursday” of *Innocence* … suggests urban rather than rural poverty” (49). Yet in Blake’s design there is not a building in sight; what we see in addition to despairing women and dead or dying children is greensward, a lake, hills, mountains, and a leafless tree. Even the Piper’s “rural pen” “turns the wordless music of the pipe into what we now call ‘print culture’” (43), almost by definition an urban phenomenon. Even “Spring” and “Laughing Song” are enlisted among poems with an implied “urban setting” (47). Why the rural scenes of these *Songs* need to be enlisted in this way is not evident, as the considerable urban content of many others is manifest, and of course pastoral is itself an urban form. Nevertheless, pushing the envelope in this way does not detract from Michael’s fine discussion of individual poems. For example, she suggests that Blake’s Shepherd lives a life of “benign idleness” and “strays” like his own sheep, implying a limit to Innocence; and that the end of the first Chimney Sweeper’s dream “delineates the limits of pastoral vision in the urban setting.” In her exposition of the urban elements of the *Songs* Michael also makes excellent use of contemporary and near-contemporary descriptions. She interestingly characterizes the midnight wanderer in the last stanza of “London” as “lacking the benevolent power of the night watchman in ‘A Dream’ or the guardian angels in the highly pastoral poem ‘Night,’ but at the same time embodying a ghostly remnant of their protective functions” (73). The notion of “urban pastoral” is indeed useful if not over-literalized.

The two major types of city-building in *The Four Zoas* are weaving and building, and Michael contrasts two types of each. She points out that both parts of Night the Seventh “center about the building of a city”: one Golgonooza, the other Babylon. Urizen’s city is built by slaves and the labor of “children sold to trades” as part of his “Universal Empire” (105, citing 95: 96–100). Los himself makes a false start in Night the Fifth when, jealous of Enitharmon and Orc he sequesters them with metal pillars and “builded Golgonooza on the Lake of Udan Adan” (100, citing 59: 28–31). But when he later builds Golgonooza with its “pillars high / And Domes terrific,” it opens the “new heavens & a new Earth” of Revelation “beneath & within” (107, citing 87:
However, this city is “threefold,” it is not yet the fourfold city of Night the Ninth, Milton, and Jerusalem. (It all depends, one might add, on the perspective from which threefold reality is seen: from “below” it is a way from the world of Generation to the earthly paradise, while from “above” it is perceived as seductive and entrapping.) Enitharmon in Night the First has “no power to weave a covering for her Sins” (88). Intermittent weaving is done by Enion, but with mixed results. Weaving at its negative pole involves limitation, but in Night the Eighth, Enitharmon and her daughters weave coverings for the poor naked Spectres, bodies that are “Opend within their hearts & in their loins & in their brain” (108–9, citing 100: 20). Both building and weaving thus have their positive and negative functions, as does the labor, creative and coerced, that they employ.

Michael, of course, recognizes that The Four Zoas is a palimpsest manuscript, and that it was never completed, but, given her method and aims, she must approach it as if it were a finished whole. This necessarily leads to problems in making some transitions in the text appear smoother than in fact they are, as in the progress from the added-on ending of Night the Seventh, with its cooperation between Los-William and Enitharmon-Catherine in drawing and coloring and the beginning of Night the Eighth. Michael ignores the first page (99) of Night the Eighth and proceeds immediately to Enitharmon’s erection of looms on the next (100). This enables her to continue her admirable discussion of the theme of weaving without mentioning Blake’s introduction of the Council of God, entailing a radically different perspective on things, at the beginning of the previous page. It may simply not be possible to write literary criticism of The Four Zoas and to address its textual complexities in the same book.

In her chapter on Milton, aptly entitled “The City As Body,” Michael includes a brief survey of how society as a whole or the city in particular has been rendered as a body, as in The Statesman’s Book of John of Salisbury and in Coriolanus. The architecture of the medieval cathedral is posited as paralleling the body of Christ, and the city/body in a diseased state is linked to Defoe’s Journal of the Plague Year (some allusion to Blake’s interest in plague as a pictorial subject might also have been pertinent). Michael argues that Milton “strives for an urban romanticism that transcends the difficulties of mimesis and rivalry between nature and imagination” (118). Although not mentioned here, Charles Lamb’s letter to Wordsworth defending the city as a subject for poetry could be included in this urban romanticism, as could Baudelaire’s later vision of Paris at dawn as an old workman picking up his tools. Perhaps Blake’s Golgonooza represents the ultimate urban romanticism, here and in Blake’s most ambitious work, Jerusalem.

“Los stands in London building Golgonooza” (Jerusalem 10.17), rendering seemingly formless materials into form. Michael points out that both in Milton and Jerusalem it is important that the city is built, created by labor rather than descending from heaven as in Revelation. (There is actually one instance of the latter in 86:19, but the great emphasis is on Los’s building activity.) Michael defends Blake’s long description of his imagined city as a verbal map necessary for the reader to try to grasp mentally, something necessary to attempt though not possible to fully realize (and thus an aspect of the sublime?). In contrast London is a seeming chaos to those within it. The city, like Jerusalem itself, Michael argues, is a “palimpsest,” with different layers of human history to be discerned in both. Making highly effective use of contemporary descriptions, Michael points out that London was all the more a mystery to its observers because they could not attain an overall view of it, with no central high point and a meandering river. She discusses Wordsworth’s London sojourn in The Prelude as showing how
overpowering the sense of being entrapped in planographic London could be. For Blake, this makes it all the more important that the spiritual fourfold city be inscribed fully.

Jennifer Michael has an impressive command of previous criticism, and she presents her own arguments clearly and forcefully. Hers is primarily not a work of discovery but rather of consolidation and re-structuring, a recasting of our apprehension of Blake’s work according to generic and thematic elements. In addition to making effective use of prose works prior to and contemporary with Blake, she provides rich literary contexts for Blake’s poetry; among the eighteenth-century poems introduced for this purpose are Swift’s “Description of a City Shower,” Goldsmith’s “Deserted Village,” Samuel Johnson’s “London,” and Cowper’s “Task.” Many details of the topography of London are also worked into the exposition. There is but one puzzling omission. There was a second city in Blake’s life – Chichester. Blake spent three years just seven miles from its ancient walls, four gates, market cross, and Cathedral. It would have been worthwhile to consider how Chichester could have impressed Blake’s imagination in this highly impressive and otherwise comprehensive critical study.

References

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The two studies under review reveal that there are disparate critical approaches to major revolutionary texts and that these different approaches have their analogue in the dialectic created during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries between the scientific revolution and the advent of Romantic empiricism. That this dynamic endures and informs today’s human rights climate is underscored by the consistent recovery of many Romantic-era texts that open new spheres of inquiry and add hitherto unknown nuances to presupposed ideological demarcations. Contributing heavily to our understanding of the revolution debate has been the resurgence of contemporary conservative texts, facilitated by critics who have been able to justify this inclusion with the discovery of some redeeming quality that mitigates their
otherwise unpalatable political content. Recent work by Lisa Wood and M.O. Grenby devoted entirely to conservative or anti-Jacobin fiction, as well as Pickering & Chatto’s scholarly five-volume series of anti-Jacobin novels, have complicated facile divisions within the debate and forced a reconsideration of the proper placement of conservatism within the academy. However, the addition of these texts has not been without resistance, and is seemingly expected to follow a certain narrative which engages the terms of their subjects’ philosophical forebears, set not by the participants themselves, but by their critics, then and now. As Grenby himself articulates in his introduction to Mrs. Bullock’s Dorothea, “critics have generally felt compelled to … show why, despite their complicity with patriarchy, [anti-Jacobin] novels are worth studying” (x). Indeed, this compensatory approach reflects a tendency to view the age of revolution through a modern political lens and pits the noble defenders of the “Rights of Man” against those who would stifle basic freedoms.

What these approaches have failed to discover is that many arguing for natural rights in Britain did not always do so on the universalist grounds of the Enlightenment, nor did they reject outright the role of history in securing those rights. Moreover, initially fervent supporters of the French Revolution in many cases rejected its concomitant violence not as an aberration, but rather as evidence of a fallible philosophy. So while the inclusion of peripheral texts is critical to a comprehensive approach to the Revolution, the terms on which these texts are often received are clouded by what they have come to connote only in the last half century. There has consequently arisen a need to examine texts according to their contexts, and not as progenitors to those ideological gradations that have finally culminated in the twenty-first-century rights movements.

The two books under review thus complement each other well, not least because their bold approaches revisit the most prominent names in the revolution as primary subjects. Indeed, at first glance, the inclusion of Burke, Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and to a certain degree Paine, as principal subjects, risks piling on and exploiting the major players of a critical debate that has become nothing less than an academic industry. Yet both Jarrells and Hodson offer a refreshing and unique approach to their subjects, and each critic’s methodology underscores rather than belabor or efface the principal arguments of the other. Both authors seem to respond to the modern scholarly impulse to neatly dichotomize the revolutionary “debate” (a term that is in itself oppositional) and its resultant texts. As modern critical responses often correspond to the political culture that pervades the humanities, Britain’s Bloodless Revolutions and Language and Revolution contain valuable, clear-sighted, and dispassionate analyses of how the revolution debate was formed.

Operating in a strain of revisionist corrective, Anthony Jarrells traces the advent of a Romantic “Literature,” catalyzed not by the immediate Revolution but by the events that transpired a century earlier. Britain’s Bloodless Revolutions targets traditional readings of the Romantic canon which situate revolutionary literature as defensive reactions to resurgent governmental controls. Jarrells contends that this literature was in fact infused with a more proactive agency, channeling the legacy of the Glorious Revolution to prevent the type of violent insurrection that has hitherto characterized the Romantic period. To achieve his stated purpose, Jarrells dissects the mythic qualities of a “bloodless” revolution and marks the appropriation of that event by writers throughout the eighteenth century. These writers helped secure the enduring relevancy of the event, often seeking its validation as a signpost of a national and political modernity, however divergent their conceptions of it. Jarrells traces the
rewriting of 1688 throughout the eighteenth century and argues that a lack of identifiable “revolution literature” during the Glorious Revolution contributed to history’s having defined it as “bloodless.”

Taking into account the Whig-liberal history that notes 1688 as having been anything but “bloodless,” especially for the geopolitical border regions, Jarrells articulates the implications for such deceptive designations and applies the term with a more critical literary accent. The revolution was not necessarily bloodless for its having passed peacefully through an epoch of popular revolt and monarchical cession of power, but rather for its failure to animate that revolution by its transmission in literary form. It was, in effect, a revolution without life, susceptible to a constant refashioning, including its enduring rendering of having been merely the “terminus of an earlier revolution” (10) or even the more sinister “preservation of a burgeoning capitalist economy” (5). Indeed, the path and legacy of 1688 as a revolution was marked belatedly, and thus as Jarrells posits, that event re-emerges in the 1790s amidst the violent convulsions in France to enact Britain’s second “bloodless revolution.” This one, however, would be invigorated by the ascendancy of a consolidated literary sphere and a resultant national culture that transcended politics and forswore the violence endemic to popular revolt.

This interpretive model goes against the grain of much scholarship on the Enlightenment, enmeshed as it is within rights debates brought to the fore by the French Revolution. Coeval with this approach, though, was the problem of transmitting revolutionary ideals, propounded by a literary elite, to the lower classes whose investment in promises of equality and enfranchisement was considerably greater. Here Jarrells offers one of his more compelling arguments by reconciling the contradictions and asymmetries inherent to the designation of the Enlightenment as a precursor to the modern liberal state. Where civil order was at stake, “enlightened discussion was fine as long as it remained entirely within the intellectual realm” (35), and hence the danger of Thomas Paine’s polemic to exploit a general populace unprepared to temper radical ideas with rational thought. In other words, the proliferation of revolutionary publications needed to be regulated since it had become a symbol of a new reading public, one that encompassed an unscrupulous mass better left in ignorance.

Since Burke and other establishment writers had linked popular violence to widely accessible and broadly defined forms of writing, there had become a need on all sides “to distance themselves from ‘the people,’ that is, from words and genres that might be thought to foment violence” (35). Thus, the advent of intellectual disciplinary boundaries became coterminous with the emergence of a literary culture that would subordinate the basely political, or more accurately, the source of violent revolution. As Jarrells clearly notes, “literature had to rise above writing in order to sever itself from the more violent aspects of Enlightenment” (77). Such an assertion oddly brings together putative ideological opponents in their determination to pre-empt the kind of bloodletting seen in France. It also further complicates the dichotomized dynamics of scholarship on the revolution debate, as there seems to be a direct lineage from the continental Enlightenment to a postmodern culture suspicious of institutions and wholly reliant on individual conscience and universal rights. It has long been a point of contention whether radical or “Jacobin” writers could remain steadfast in their support of the French Revolution’s “original principles” which had produced such a startling amount of violence in the name of the Rights of Man. Thus it is worth asking the question whether the tumult was produced by or simply ran afoul of those principles.
Crucial to providing a sufficient answer is the establishment of an historical continuity between Romantic literature and its forebears and the acknowledgement of a separation of that literature from the Enlightenment political philosophies with which it is usually associated. Jarrells deftly does both, and in the process goes against the grain of traditional responses to a literature that was presumed to have been influenced by the French Revolution and the English failure to duplicate it. Employing the periodization-scheme to theorize the role of 1688 in informing the debate of the 1790s, Jarrells suggests that “Romantic-period literature can be better understood in its points of contact with the earlier period and not solely in terms of constituting some kind of radical break from it” (18). Such an approach has implications well beyond a greater contextual clarity, since it interrupts traditional critical narratives that would align progressive post-revolutionary writing with the Enlightenment insistence on a complete break from invariably oppressive institutions.

Yet it is this very reliance on the literature and events of the past that allowed radical writers to enact a gradual revolution in the face of anti-Jacobin and government opposition. As Jarrells argues, “the dissemination of information and reasoned opinion was one of the defining traits of the Enlightenment” (48), and thus reformers and radicals alike felt justified in providing the masses with the reasons and possibly the means for peaceful rebellion. Here Richard Price and Thomas Paine are held up as paragons of the benevolent reformer, recognizing the power of the press to re-enact their interpretation of 1688, seen as the foundation for ultimately subordinating parliamentary control to the will of the people (58). Yet this seems to run counter to the traditional critical reception of the counter-revolution, echoed here, that it was “a combination of a conservative, anti-Jacobin force in letters and a government fearing the importation of revolution from abroad that created the link between print and violence” (49). Hence, men and women of letters were compelled to inaugurate a “Romantic revolution,” constructing disciplinary boundaries to disconnect literature from “the people” and establish that entity as an abstract theoretical, a vehicle with which to propagate the beleaguered ideals of the revolution. Jarrells recognizes that “many writers made the explicit connection between their reformist and populist ideals and print” (49), but it was only opponents who, quite successfully, connected those ideals with revolutionary violence. This echoes a bit more closely the contention that any later disavowals in print of a popular uprising were due to a pervasive fear of reprisal rather than an ingenuous retreat from principles that had failed to secure the rights they promised.

Perhaps the most notable contribution to Romantic scholarship here is the way in which the continental Enlightenment is recontextualized and defined in many ways against this new “national” literature. Because theories of human rights and universal liberty are fetishized in academic circles today, opposition to their initial entrance into the public realm via the French Revolution is traditionally interpreted as a blatant obstruction of progress and a nativist resistance to a just modernity. Yet Jarrells’s identification of a new Literature, “well-conducted” and distinct from that which would incite violence either on behalf of or against national institutions, allows for a reconsideration of the influence of the French Revolution on the radical movement in Britain. Using T.J. Mathias’s *The Pursuits of Literature* as evidence of a call for a consciously non-violent free press, Jarrells notes that government attempts to curb seditious writing were as dangerous as the writing itself, or at least as dangerous as the conservative press would have it. Thus, the link between literature and the “popular” had to be broken, and for radicals and reformers, “the bloodlessness of 1688 offered
Forms of popular literature were eclipsed by a new cultural form ostensibly aligned with Burkean notions of an organic society, free to develop naturally without the tampering of metaphysicians and novelists.

Jarrells sees the literary and the political as analogous and argues for the new non-violent Literature as an entity without form, disentangled from systematized and more general “writing.” This figures heavily in the creation of a national form of writing, the transition to which is embodied by Wordsworth, who is presented as having concurrently presented an alternative to “lower” forms of writing and a practical rethinking of national events. In essence, a rewriting of 1688 necessitated a turn away from 1789 and propelled what Jarrells calls “a couple of competing narratives of modernity,” those identified simply as “English and French” (86). Here Jarrells again deviates from traditional renderings and recovers a nationalistic ethos from the exclusive realm of counter-revolution and Burkean status quo preservation: “The symbolic use of a pre-modern past in Wordsworth functions as a symbolic substitute for the state and signifies a modernity that did not necessitate radical ideologies of rupture from the past. Tradition, in other words, was a way of consolidating the new” (86–7).

Such an approach confronts the cosmopolitan vision often seen as a prerequisite for any human rights agenda and counters widely-held assumptions that Enlightenment thought was manifested by the French Revolution and thwarted only by aberrational tyranny in France and a conservative, despotic opposition in England.

The rise of any national institution, even one presented as altruistically as this one, is anathema to the self-legislation ushered in by the *philosophes*. Those opposed to the Revolution needed to find philosophical ground on which to form notions of right that incorporated old standards of civic virtue against the more tenuous obligations of those modeled on self-interest. As such, Jarrells notes a break from the continental Enlightenment and asserts the absorption of an alternative mode of understanding, one that merges the absolute reason of Kant, Voltaire, and Condorcet with the irrepressible historical empiricism of many of their British counterparts. Chapters four and five are dedicated accordingly to the rise of the Scottish Enlightenment and its relationship to Romantic-era writing. Instead of constructing this literature as indicative of anti-Enlightenment thought, Jarrells positions it as simply the product of an alternative Enlightenment, “a defense of what Enlightenment in Britain had arisen to legitimate: bloodless Revolution” (152).

This presents a challenge to those who would link “enlightenment” with revolution and place opposition to the French Revolution in an anti-Enlightenment context. Yet precisely because 1688 figured heavily in the eighteenth-century British imagination, an ideology emerged during that time which valorized the Protestant settlement as underwriting social progress. Political historians have long distinguished the Scottish Enlightenment from the materialism guiding the French, noting, like Peter Schröder, that “in Scotland what mattered most was the delineation of the human attributes most likely to foster commercial process and the new civic virtue and political economy that would follow” (308). Jarrells seems to follow this line, enumerating various reconstructions of 1688 which had used the ensuing Jacobite threat “to institute a competing ideology that would render Jacobitism as dead ideologically as the English army had done militarily” (159). Thus, while France consciously became decidedly anti-institution, Scottish philosophers felt that “liberty and order” had been secured by the settlement of 1688 and the Union of 1707. The Scottish Enlightenment philosophy that had set itself up in opposition to the Jacobite uprising helped to facilitate the establishment of a British national Literature, which unlike Jacobitism – and for many
Britons France itself – was framed as “institutional, pro-1688 and 1707, forward thinking, and non-violent” (159).

This point is reinforced by lengthy discussions of Godwin, dexterously written to adequately make representative that author’s contributions to a rewriting of revolution. Jarrells does make clear that there were exceptions to this national conception of literary culture, comprised mostly of those who remained steadfast to the French Revolution and incredulous of the relative liberty of British citizens. Helen Maria Williams serves to illustrate the complexity of channeling 1688 for purposes of reform since, for her, the violence of the French Revolution could be deflected onto the violent history of England and portrayed as a necessary evil in the establishment of liberty and the Rights of Man (130–1). Yet it is Godwin’s development as a political writer that places Britain’s Bloodless Revolutions in conversation with traditional readings of radical writers, since the ideological revisions found in later editions of Political Justice as well as the fictional Caleb Williams are said to be correctives of earlier notions of the French Revolution rather than simply palliatives to relentless anti-Jacobinism.

The latter has been the more convenient approach in Romantic scholarship since it allows critics to at once extol the courageous musings of political dissidents and rebuke the opposition for silencing dissent. Yet scholars such as W.A. Speck have approached this paradigm with uncertainty, remarking that “in Britain there is so little evidence of subversive activity that historians of radicalism have been reduced to arguing that it went underground during these years” (143). Jarrells does not recover Godwin entirely from his radical contemporaries, and seems to note the ambivalence surrounding Godwin’s early enthusiasm for the revolution. Whereas some scholars such as Steven Blakemore have argued that the events of 1793 effected a kind of “unwriting” of earlier ideals, Jarrells argues that Godwin’s newly tempered approach to politics was as much ideological as reactive: “Godwin’s turn toward a counter-Enlightenment literary sphere seems a retreat from radicalism – an attempt to circumvent the ‘brute force’ of the government and the people” (114). The assertion renders problematic any precise identification of a revisionist philosophy, since the circumvention of either entity suggests a maintenance of dissent as well as a betrayal of Enlightenment populism.

However, this does not damage Jarrells’s study. Rather, it elucidates the multilayered fabric of revolutionary politics and the problematic nature of scholarship that factionalizes this period’s foremost participants. The closest connection we can make between our (post)modern human rights debates and those prompted by the Enlightenment is that their legacies are cemented as much by external critics as actual participants. Godwin could never separate himself from perceptions of Rousseauvian influence or calls for violent revolution and that legacy remains largely intact today. But today’s judgments are often colored by the self-fulfilling prophecies of his contemporaries, often eager to confuse even moderate reform with violent revolution. This study goes a long way toward a proper contextualization of revolution and its multifarious responses and is not easily swayed by the misreadings and false attributions of a conservative press.

Given the modern affinities for the Romantic-era’s anti-establishment Left, this presentation of a possible radical retrenchment in Britain is apposite to Jane Hodson’s illuminating inquiry into language and its role in the conceptualizing of revolutionary ideology. Hodson presents a quantitative study of the language used by four of the most formative writers of the revolutionary period using contemporary linguistic
theories and codified language patterns standardized by the proliferation of instructive grammar books. In doing so, the author contextualizes critical responses to these texts and dispels postmodern renderings of any “standardized” grammar and writing style as necessarily ideological, repressive forms of political control. Hence modern liberal sensibilities are discomposed when it is revealed that the hitherto supposed “plain” style of the populist Thomas Paine contains more instances of rhetorical ornamentation (metaphor, personification, metonymy, etc.) than the nefarious and obscurantist stylings of Burke’s *Reflections* (136). This is of course to oversimplify the degree and dynamism of these tropes in each writer, but Hodson’s point is not lost. What she discovers is that the merit of the work in question was evaluated in terms of the writer’s style but was nevertheless regularly aligned with the reviewer’s acceptance or disavowal of the ideas contained within it. This has distorted modern conceptions of the aesthetic principles of eighteenth-century political writing and fostered an expedient connectivity between an author’s politics and the language used to convey them. Such readings are largely inevitable, since “the way in which readers respond to the style of a text is significantly determined by the stylistic norms within which they are reading” (3). Certainly this is not all that surprising, but what becomes most valuable to scholars is Hodson’s contextualization of style and the way in which contemporary literary tropes and rhetorical techniques are thrown into relief by their linguistic descendants.

Thus, *Language and Revolution in Burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin* is a corrective to the pioneering yet ultimately reductivist studies on the role of language and politics, most notably Olivia Smith’s *The Politics of Language 1791–1819* and James Boulton’s *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke*. As one might discern from the titles alone, these texts are concerned mostly with how language either worked to convey a political message or was itself politicized to further silence the disaffected. Yet as Hodson astutely notes, such studies often tell us as much about our own political climate – and indeed that of literary criticism – as that of the literary period or genre in question. The notion of language as a tool of oppression has been reified by the politically-driven discipline of sociolinguistics and persists under the wide umbrella of postcolonial and cultural studies. But Hodson’s meticulous inquiry into the justness of legacies built upon language asserts that contemporary disagreement about a “correct” English language transcended political loyalties. This unsettling of the ideological firmament of language studies is most starkly evidenced by Godwin’s – not Burke’s – rather strict adherence to prescriptive (and for Smith, “hegemonic”) linguistic norms while promoting a radical political program. This and other innovative developments on the work of the period’s foremost political writers represent Smith’s work as a case study in political displacement, given the peculiar circumstance of Smith’s focus of language in the Romantic period as having been inspired by the Black Power movement in 1960s America (7).

For Hodson, the relationship between language and politics in the eighteenth century is complicated, non-linear, and resistant to ideological imposition. Aside from taking up cudgels against linguistic ideologues like Smith and Boulton, Hodson seeks to detach the postmodern linguistic conception of language as a vehicle of class warfare from the context in which the language of eighteenth-century political writers was received and interpreted. In other words, Hodson’s book transcends a modern preoccupation with facile political categorization of eighteenth-century texts, commonly influenced as much by the politics of the critic as by the content itself. While the focus here is on recovering contemporary linguistic philosophies to better
understand the rhetorical modes of eighteenth-century political composition, Hodson’s painstaking analysis traces a trajectory of criticism that has disingenuously relied on style to either extol or discredit the work in question.

The intersection of style and politics has not been sufficiently interrogated, and critics have been too willing to accept at face value either an author’s own stylistic claims or contemporary reviews that allowed political bias to masquerade as stylistic scrupulousness. By contextualizing political texts within the framework of the English language as it was conceived by contemporary grammarians and the political writers themselves, Hodson demonstrates the need to view the rhetorical identity of these writers as influenced by more than political proclivities. Her authority is bolstered by a comprehensive appendix that catalogs fifty instructive grammar and linguistic texts written in the 1790s and used as a foundation for the book’s arguments. Through careful delineation of how linguistics has been historicized, the author is able to distill her purpose thus: “Linguistic concepts are not intrinsically aligned with a particular political viewpoint,” and hence “a much more sophisticated and multidimensional understanding of ‘radical’ and ‘conservative’ in relation to linguistic ideas is necessary” (19). To this end, Hodson integrates the historicizing function of linguistic analysis into a critical approach that examines how both texts and their immediate contexts defy our own historically contingent responses to style (20).

Devoting the second chapter to a comprehensive review of instructional books on language usage, Hodson outlines the scope of the project and provides readers with a more than cursory glimpse into how language usage was conceived by writers during the revolutionary decade. Of most use, perhaps, to scholars of the revolution debate is the proper historical placement of rhetoric, the development of which has led to a confusion of purpose and a fundamental misunderstanding of how the device has changed. Confronting a more traditional approach that would posit an increased abuse of the term to manipulate its original function, Hodson suggests a natural development of rhetoric itself to explain its varying significations. Rhetoric as “a firmly grounded discipline with a highly developed intellectual framework” (29) had given way to a new form of linguistic clarity by the end of the eighteenth century, and fused Enlightenment empiricism with the “perspicuity and elegance” that had hitherto defined it. Thus, when attention is given to certain stylistic techniques of eighteenth-century writers, the modern reader risks projecting a pejoratively connotated version of rhetoric onto conscious forms and interpretations of linguistic clarity. This tendency illustrates the contention that our definition of rhetoric is not so much inaccurate as simply reflective of the disintegration of the discipline.

A practical application of this concept is exercised throughout the book, but is perhaps made clearest in discussions of Burke, whose rhetorical style has been closely scrutinized and often impugned since Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication*. The structure of Hodson’s book is consistent with the overall clarity of her argument, as individual chapters on primary authors highlight a concentration of purpose and contribute to a consciously accessible cohesion. Yet most importantly, ordering the chapters to correspond chronologically to the major political texts of the period reflects the historical trajectory of scholarship on the revolution debate, which appoints Burke – albeit sometimes begrudgingly – as the polemicist against which all the others are measured. Hodson speaks of the hesitancy of scholars to reconcile themselves to the enduring longevity of *Reflections*, preferring at times to bemoan its egregious linguistic sleights of hand rather than entertain the notion of its political viability.
To illustrate the influence critical reviews have had throughout history on perceptions of particular authors, Hodson notes the particularly visceral nature of some twentieth-century responses to instances of Burke’s “vulgar” language usage, which have relied only on remote historical evidence and an oversimplified schematization of contemporary linguistic debate. Understanding this debate within its proper context becomes vital to understanding the effects, intended and otherwise, that certain linguistic tropes and techniques would have had on a contemporary audience. It is clear that responses to style varied in proportion to the degree to which content aligned with the reviewer’s politics. This connection, indeed, is not new, as critics have for decades noted the predictably rancorous summations of radical literature by conservative periodicals. Yet while those responses, given their unsavory political perspective, have been discredited and used to validate their subjects and legitimize their canonicity, the criticism from authors deigned “radical,” also masquerading under the auspices of style, has been taken at face value and adopted to current narratives of the counter-revolution. To make this point and correct its deficiencies, it is imperative, then, that such touchstones of revolutionary literature as Burke and Paine are studied both for their own thoughts on language and those of their audiences.

To make her case, Hodson points out that a cursory glance at Johnson’s Dictionary would reveal that specific proofs of vulgarity routinely used in criticism of Burke had been vetted by decidedly non-vulgar hommes des lettres Addison, Dryden, and Shakespeare (43). Yet this speaks as much to historical contingencies as personal bias, and represents an inversion of what a distinctly conservative press used as a pretense to disparage Paine’s efforts. As Hodson discovers, “where the positive reviews find plainness and a rejection of delusive ornament, the more negative reviews find vulgarity and dangerous persuasion” (126). Before the advent of a middle-class reading public, language indeed had been used for the purposes of class discrimination, and so any political message expressly directed towards “the people” was a threat to existing establishments. Thus, Paine’s style, at least by his own account employed “to make those that can scarcely read understand” (116–7), was dismissed as exploitative pandering. Paraphrasing the main thrust of a fairly typical response to Rights of Man, we read that “by flattering the lower orders, Paine successfully communicates revolutionary sentiments to them” (116). Yet as that author’s intentions in Rights of Man are more palatable to critics within today’s rights era, contemporary accusations of “coarse sophistry” have been interpreted as a testament to Paine’s democratic prose and its concomitantly populist message. Hence Paine’s “intellectual vernacular prose” is Burke’s “vulgarity.” Hodson makes clear that modern readers are prone to believe what Paine himself says about his own views of language when a careful examination of his actual work reveals a discontinuity between his precepts and his practice.

Thus the revealing case study accompanying Hodson’s reappraisal of Paine’s laudatory critical reception is vital to a renewed appreciation of the intricacies within the language and their effect on the predominant writers of that time. Paine’s accusations of Burke’s florid style do not hold up against his own abundant use of rhetorical tropes, meant to persuade, if not deceive, and like Burke, promote the acceptance of a particular version of events. Such an analysis, though, does more than belie conventional wisdom as to the undisputed influence of Reflections. By elucidating the historical development of rhetorical linguistics, Hodson both privileges the primacy of language and checks the impulse to investigate the conflict in any way that is at variance with how its terms were received at the actual moment. Moreover, by looking quantitatively at tropes disparaged by contemporaries as “decorative and deceitful,”
Hodson is able to demonstrate empirically that “when reviewers and critics describe Paine’s style as plain and Burke’s as heavily ornamented, [it] seems to reflect the fact the writer in question is sympathetic to Paine’s politics, rather than necessarily being an accurate description of their comparative styles” (131). Thus a conclusion such as that offered by Evelyn Hinz that Paine’s style “is better labeled demagogic than democratic” has not endured, supplanted by the alacrity with which any mention of rights is received in today’s academic milieu. As Hodson boldly asserts, “this seems to be, at least in part, because modern commentators on Paine … find [his] political position so uncontroversial that they do not look closely at how he presents them [sic]” (121).

That the narrative of Paine’s “plain” style has endured bespeaks the neglect of distinctions in appraisals of stylistic technique, especially when rhetoric is defined pejoratively as a tool of deception and misdirection. Yet to be thus situated is not only disingenuous, but also reflects a selective acceptance of contemporary criticism, uncritically avowing traditional narratives of Burke’s style while preferring a nuanced manipulation of those whose content is more suited to the accepted rights paradigms of Western culture.

Given the breadth of her research and the subsequent isolation of distinct trends in linguistic criticism, Hodson indeed succeeds in unveiling the closer affinity of today’s scholars with those they would critique to view politics and language as indissoluble correlatives. Yet even more, Hodson adroitly demonstrates how a concentrated focus on the rightness or wrongness of either side of the revolution debate has confounded modern conceptions of how contemporary authors themselves conceived of language and its function. This is no more apparent than in a chapter devoted to Godwin’s Political Justice, a text as much revered for its enlightenment universalism as damned for its arcane and diffuse philosophical posture. The author’s approach underscores the inconsistencies that accompany subscription to the notion that adherence to a prescriptive linguistics betrays a conservative politics.

To this end, Hodson seeks to contest the redemptive criticism that would mark Godwin’s attention to language as reflective of the elevated tenor of his philosophy. Whereas Wollstonecraft relied on the unevenness of her text – the result of “the effusions of the moment” – to prove her sincerity, three substantially revised editions of Political Justice in the 1790s leave readers with “no suggestion that [Godwin feels] the text is improved by its imperfections” (150). It then begs the question whether it is possible for the politically radical Godwin to be complicit in the hegemony of language used by conservatives for purposes of class discrimination. For Hodson, the answer is yes, though it does not change the tenor of the author’s social radicalism. In concise, well-supported terms, the argument is made that “despite his radical politics, Godwin’s linguistic ideas are (at least by modern standards) deeply conservative” (152). It is curious then that critics have attributed to Godwin’s lucidity and even “plainness” his use of decorative prose. Hodson’s comparison reveals that “plain” language did not exist as we would have it – that is, democratic and universal – but rather as an alternative rhetorical strategy, replete with the same tropes it would condemn as decorative and mystifying. It is this very supposition that contests the mutual inclusivity of an author’s politics and his or her linguistic bent. Ultimately, as Hodson incisively explains: “Paine uses literary ornaments to condemn Burke for using literary ornaments. Godwin carefully uses literary ornaments to endorse the careful use of literary ornaments” (178).

Both Jarrells and Hodson have provided important contributions to scholarship on the literature of the eighteenth century and its engagement with the politics of the
Enlightenment. Hodson’s approach reveals a critical self-awareness essential to the integrity of any such work of scholarship. She writes with astounding clarity, an aspect of her project all the more creditable for its avoidance of the cryptic jargon sometimes characteristic of technical writing. Jarrells for his part is equally faithful to his discipline and demonstrates a formidable comprehension of an historical period at times daunting for its scope. Both studies are vital to the ever-evolving critical debate on Enlightenment thought, then and now.

References

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This volume of essays edited by Michael Franklin offers a diverse array of recent scholarship on what he usefully terms colonial “metahistory”: the interrelation of fact and fiction, history and literature, that characterizes representations of the subcontinent in the Romantic era. The volume’s interdisciplinary approach – there are articles devoted to history, art, and music, besides literature – also allows it to more powerfully address the multifaceted orientalism it critiques. The volume is notable for its attention to a contiguous subcontinental intellectual discourse that is too often neglected, even in contemporary scholarship. Franklin’s introduction focuses on the largely forgotten cultural interaction between Indians and the British in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a critical counterpoint to the imperial mythos of the late Victorian era that still tends to dominate our understanding of nineteenth-century colonialism. However, Franklin is careful to not overstate the centrality of the periphery to the metropole. Rather, the authors in this volume tread a finer, subtler line in their analyses of moments of exchange and mutual adaptation.
The first article, P.J. Marshall’s “British-Indian Connection c.1780 to c.1830: The Empire of the Officials” reiterates an argument Marshall has made previously: namely, the failure of orientalism to root itself in British cultural consciousness (see his 1990 article). However, rather than abandon Britain for the Continent, as Raymond Schwab does in The Oriental Renaissance (1950), Marshall’s article traces the history of British awareness of India in order to uncover moments of cultural import. Ultimately, Marshall argues that for the most part the British public was indifferent to India, evincing neither an active interest nor a conscious repudiation. While Marshall’s argument stresses the insular nature of Anglo-Indian society and orientalist scholarship, it is telling that he spends almost no time in his article on literature. Even while acknowledging the recent work on literary orientalism, Marshall dismisses it, stating that “ultimately, however, it would be difficult to make a case that Indian cultural influences had sunk deep roots in Britain.” How exactly Marshall defines “deep-rootedness” is not made clear, but his article is a fascinating contrast to the essays in this volume that stress the importance of India as a cultural touchstone for the Romantics.

In his essay “Torrents, Flames and the Education of Desire: Battling Hindu Superstition on the London Stage,” Daniel Quinn argues that nascent definitions of British civility were formed in contrast to the theatrical representations of Hinduism popular in the early nineteenth century. Quinn then goes a step further by arguing for the correlation between changes in colonial policy and dramaturgical practices, suggesting, as he says, “that British imperial policy and British cultural production are suffused by similar self-consolidating fantasies of rule” (65). Quinn draws parallels between what he describes as the fantasies of imperial rule – namely, the paternalistic “gentrification” of Indian agriculture through the Permanent Settlement Act, and the seeming dissolution of Hinduism in the face of Christianity – with reactions to contemporary orientalist drama. The unspoken twist to Quinn’s essay is that, while representations of India may have played a part in a national discourse on civility, this occurs because critics mapped aristocratic habits onto an Indian backdrop, turning the Hindu superstitions on stage into allegorical props. Quinn’s essay is a detailed, nuanced study, but it is sometimes a challenge to pull the threads of his argument together. The line between a critical and popular reaction to these plays is often blurred, and, more importantly, although Quinn seems to argue that the plays themselves changed in conjunction with changing colonial policy, he is ultimately more concerned with the popular response to the plays than the plays themselves. Quinn sheds light on an obscure, poorly researched genre, but his intended audience seems to be other critics engaged in the same research, and not a broader audience.

Natasha Eaton analyzes the role of the gift and gift giving in Indian-British diplomacy “Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art Gift and Diplomacy in Colonial India.” Eaton rewrites current theories of the gift, which in recent years has focused too much on the altruism of gift giving. Instead, Eaton reads the gift as inherently plastic, existing between altruistic and utilitarian purposes, and shifting its nature according to context. Eaton uses this definition to examine the power dynamics between Mughal princes and the East India company as seen through the perspective of the gift – namely, the EIC’s attempt to replace the khil’at (robes of state given to subordinates) and nazr (gifts of tribute) with portraits. Of particular interest is Eaton’s analysis of the role of European painters in India, who flooded the portrait market during the Hastings regime and who were situated somewhere between the roles of artist and diplomat. Eaton’s discussion of the artists’ payment plans is extensive, but her analysis
of the effect of European portraiture on Indian concepts of space, and the imbrication of European artistic techniques and the idea of darshan (translatable, in this article, to the “gift of sight”) is a fascinating example of the far-reaching effects of colonial-native diplomacy.

Timothy Fulford’s “Poetic Flowers / Indian Bowers” is an analysis of the language of botany in colonial poetry. Arguing that botanical information from India changed the discourse of landscape in England, Fulford focuses on Sir William Jones’s poetic and scientific classification of the Indian landscape. Fulford’s analysis shows us how Jones’s interest in botany coincides with his literary orientalism – a diplomatic introduction of new material in familiar guises. Continuing the tradition of situating Jones as a “pre-Romantic,” Fulford outlines the importance of Jones’s nature poetry to Southey and Coleridge, whose “Kubla Khan” demonstrates the impact of Jonesian orientalism. Tracing the history of Linnaean botany in the classification and commodification of eastern plants, Fulford argues that Jones’s orientalist ambivalence – the tension between cultural admiration and colonial administration – is most evident in his study of flowers. Jones’s poetry, which Fulford reads as “colonization-in-reverse,” upends the universalizing process by asking British readers to appreciate Indian landscapes and traditions. Fulford’s delineation of Jones’s poetry is a delicate one, especially in the light of Jones’s arguable “westernization” of Sanskrit terms and concepts through his mostly conventional poetic form in his translation and original poetry. This debate is one that has roiled Jones scholarship for years, and he usefully outlines what he calls Jones’s “ecological anthropology,” the hybrid poetry that examines Indian culture through its plant life.

Nebulous syncretism is also the subject of the next essay, Lynda Pratt’s “‘Where … Success [is] Certain?’ Southey the Literary East Indiaman.” Pratt builds on the recent resurgence of interest in Southey’s poetry – particularly his epics – by tracing the tortured history of “The Curse of Kehama,” Southey’s venture into Hindu mythology. Pratt attempts to solve a question that has vexed Southey scholars – why Southey would write a poem on a subject he seemed to detest – by looking at the early years of “Kehama”’s composition and the beginnings of Southey’s interest in India. While Southey was no orientalist, Pratt reads his growing interest in India, and his representations of India in “Kehama,” through his rejection of a job offer in the East Indian-bar and his repudiation of the hybrid orientalist culture that had flourished during the Hastings years. Pratt reads Southey’s poetic obstinacy as evidence of his pedagogical self-awareness – the responsibilities he felt in his role as national poet – and as symptomatic of a national vacillation over the role and nature of the nascent British Empire.

The changing discourse of Empire is also the subject of Michael Franklin’s article, “Radically Feminizing India: Phebe Gibbes’s Hartly House, Calcutta (1789) and Sydne Owenson’s The Missionary: An Indian Tale (1811).” Balachandran Rajan first paired these novels as examples of a gendered resistance to East-West binaries in Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay (1999), but Franklin’s interest lies in the novels’ political efficacy. While literary orientalism has often been distanced from its political counterpart, Franklin argues that such novels only partially masked their political consciousness in sentimentality, combining critiques of current colonial and gender politics: Owenson and Gibbes do not merely feminize India, they feminize orientalist scholarship. Ultimately, despite these novels’ emphasis on exotic spectacle, Franklin argues that both Gibbes and Owenson employ romance as a means to mitigating difference.
Tilar Mazzeo’s article “The Strains of Empire: Shelley and the Music of India” enriches the scholarship on Shelley and music by uncovering the poet’s interest in Indian music. In doing so, Mazzeo’s article attests to the lively interest in Indian music during the early nineteenth century. While Mazzeo describes how British transcriptions of Indian music underscored notions of Indian femininity and enchantment, she reads Shelley’s particular negotiation of poetry and empire through his use of music in “Alastor” and *The Assassins*, and then in his late verses to Jane Williams, his exoticized muse. Tying together Shelley’s interests in magnetism and aesthetics, Mazzeo argues that Indian music helped Shelley unify his disparate thoughts on poetry and empire, resulting in a “musical and aesthetic colonialism” that only partially succeeds in countering martial imperialism.

Indian music is also the subject of Bennett Zon’s article, “From ‘Very Acute and Plausible’ to ‘Curiously Misinterpreted’: Sir William Jones ‘On the Musical Mode of the Hindus’ (1792) and its Reception in Later Musical Treatises.” Zon reminds us that, linguistics, law, poetry, and botany aside, Jones was also a “significant yet transitional” figure in historical ethnomusicology. Interestingly, Zon’s article details Jones’s attempts to contextualize music through poetics: for example, Jones searched for musical authenticity by heightening its resemblance to poetry. Although later musicologists disagreed with Jones’s easy translation of Indian music into a western aesthetic, Zon stresses the persistence with which Jones’s orientalist approach has dominated the field.

Nigel Leask’s article, “‘Travelling the Other Way: The Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan (1810) and Romantic Orientalism” expands on the work Leask began with *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840: From an Antique Land*. Comparing Khan’s narrative to Elizabeth Hamilton’s fictional travelogue *The Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796), Leask argues that neither Khan nor Hamilton’s travelogues fit neatly into postcolonial binaries of hegemony and representation. Leask reads Khan’s *Travels* as a uniquely pre-colonial work that does not ascribe to a nineteenth-century historical telos. While Leask does not arrive at any definitive conclusions, he stresses the need to define Khan’s occidentalism in more dynamic terms than have been afforded in postcolonial scholarship. By merely reading Khan’s text as another example of ventriloquism, Leask warns us that we risk flattening the complexities of political and intellectual life in the Mughal world.

Douglas Peers’s “Conquest Narratives: Romanticism, Orientalism, and Intertextuality in the Indian writings of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Orme” considers the roots of the myth of Britain’s inevitable military superiority in the subcontinent. Peers argues that romanticized accounts of military encounters stressed an “innate” superiority of British over Indian, one which allowed for a retooling of colonial conquest into heroic enterprise. Military discourse also allowed for an explanation of British superiority that rested on environmental, as opposed to biological factors. Peers’s consideration of the didactic purpose of historical romances is a critical one, especially as it vindicates the significance of Scott’s often-slighted “The Surgeon’s Daughter.” Reading “The Surgeon’s Daughter” and Robert Orme’s historical works, Peers usefully analyzes the ways in which the military discourse in these texts provides a layer of factuality that obfuscates their racist, orientalist assumptions.

The volume’s concluding article, Amit Ray’s “Orientalism and Religion in the Romantic Era: Rammohan Ray’s *Vedanta(s)*” is a reconsideration of British representations of Hinduism. Ray focuses particularly on the orientalist interest in Hindu monotheism, and in Rammohan Roy’s crucial role in interpreting Hinduism for the
West. As Ray argues, Roy was one of the first Indians to define an identity in response to European critiques of India. Too little has been written about Indian-British intellectual discourse, and Ray’s article usefully details how the modern version of the Vedanta that Roy and the orientalists propagated became central not only to Indian reformers’ conceptions of modern Hinduism, but to western liberal theology as well.

References

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