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**Aims and Scope:** Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is a twice-yearly journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality, and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists, and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. As of Issue 15 (Winter 2005), *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality, and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

asserting that Hunt differs from his contemporaries in his 'frankness about his feelings' (p. 104), his 'conversational tone' (p. 111), in the way that he neither uses 'his observations of Italy to reveal his superior taste and education in a self-congratulatory fashion' (p. 107) nor 'indulge[s] in criticism of previous contributors to the genre' (p. 114), and in the manner in which he relates his experiences abroad to his experiences 'as an Englishmen, more particularly as a Londoner' (p. 107). Eberle-Sinatra regards these innovations as superior even to Hunt's theatrical criticism and his writing on poetic language. To assert that it is a novelty to present travel literature as informal letters to be 'read as if they were addressed to a friend rather than an impersonal reader' overlooks many examples of the genre from the eighteenth century. Patrick Brydone's *Tour Through Sicily and Malta* (1773) and Helen Maria Williams's *Letters Written in France in the Summer 1790, to A Friend in England* (1790) are two such examples. Eberle-Sinatra's claims for Hunt's originality in theatre criticism are much more convincing. The final section of this chapter looks at the reviews of Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* (1828). Henry Colburn, who published the book, also praised it in his periodical *New Monthly Magazine*. Eberle-Sinatra comments that 'this specific review is really only a puffing piece designed to promote the sales of Hunt's work' (p. 119). Eberle-Sinatra does not explore how Hunt may have reconciled this endorsement with his views on critical independence, or whether Hunt may have felt his independence in any way compromised in writing on an acquaintance.

Eberle-Sinatra is devoted to detail in this book, and there is something of the indulgence of the editorial note in much of the writing. The book seems a little uncertain about its readership, too. It is an introductory overview that synthesizes the work of other critics, but it is also interested in the minutiae of publication expenses, the critical implications of multiple versions of the same texts, and the complexities of hostilities between various literary figures. ❏

Essaka Joshua  
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**Dino Francis Felluga, *The Perversity of Poetry: Romantic Ideology and the Popular Male Poet of Genius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), xi + 208pp. ISBN 0-791-46299-4; \$70 (hb).**

DINO FRANCIS FELLUGA'S WELL ARGUED AND THOROUGHLY RESEARCHED STUDY explores the reception history of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, and connects their popular critical reception in the nineteenth century to the ultimate dismissal of poetry as a pertinent political force. Over the course of the book, Felluga contends that a variety of critics and reviewers throughout the Romantic period systematically marginalised poetry and, moreover, the figure

of the popular male poet of genius by actively engaging a decidedly new rhetoric of health and healthiness in their critiques of popular verse, positioning both popular poetry and poets as being either, as in the case of Byron, symptoms of social illness or, as in the case of Scott, possible panaceas for a diseased society. Felluga focuses on the crucial role contemporary periodicals, student manuals, and medical journals played in pathologising Byron and the figure of the popular male poet of genius. Felluga posits that there were two primary claims surrounding poetry and the popular poet in the Romantic period. The poetry of Scott was widely considered to be a panacea for nineteenth-century Britain, capable of reinvigorating a society driven into seeming idleness and depravity by capitalist culture and supposed effeminacy, not to mention utilitarianism and industrialism. Owing to his political radicalism, Byron was positioned counter to Scott and considered to be a contagious disease threatening to undermine society. According to Felluga, the employment of a rhetoric of health and manliness in the various periodicals of the Romantic period provided critics with the conceptual framework to oppose the force of poetry, considered dangerous simply because of what was recognised then as its unique ability to entice political revolution and actually make something happen.

Felluga establishes the historical context for his claims by opening with a painstaking consideration of the various medical discourses that surrounded the popular male poet of genius in the early nineteenth century. He contends that due to 'new ways of thinking about the human and social being' during the Romantic period, 'civilization itself was seen as a sign of ill health [...] and learning of all sorts was thus characterized as a potentially unhealthy pursuit' (p. 13). According to Felluga, those in the medical professions felt a pertinent need to distinguish themselves from the sort of 'diseased' geniuses who created imaginary literature, in order to 'separate their own endeavors from the very disease they attributed to scholarly pursuits' (p. 20) and carve a place for themselves in the popular marketplace.


In the second chapter, Felluga examines the ways in which Scott engaged in the marketplace and protected himself and his work from the criticism that was being lobbed against poetry and the male poet of genius, a figure which he, along with Byron, exemplified. According to Felluga, Scott countered the new 'rhetoric of nervous sensibility and disease' by 'claiming for himself and for his metrical romances a rhetoric of manly and invigorating health' (p. 33). In effect, Scott provided the British ruling elite with a ready and public ideology of 'self-legitimization through the fetish-logic of medievalism' (p. 9) in his metrical romances, which ultimately would prove to be a crucial component to the development of the underlying ideology of the Victorian period. Scott, as Felluga contends, used Britain's own medieval past and the romance form to reinvigorate the nation, or to at least provide it with the public illusion of invigoration and liveliness. Contemporary reviewers responded by suggesting that Scott and his romances were antidotes to the apparent effeminacy of the

contemporary age exemplified by the verse and character of Byron. Felluga focuses almost exclusively on Byron in the third and fourth chapters, which are certainly the most provocative in the book. With his 'romance' *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Felluga contends that Byron countered the romances of Scott by fusing 'the temporal dynamics of the romance form to an all-encompassing satire of the present' (p. 71) and effectively turning Scott's romances inside out. Byron's political radicalism is not dismissed by Felluga in these chapters, but is instead highlighted and scrutinised. Felluga argues that 'one could [...] point directly to Byron's life for evidence of his revolutionary proclivities' (p. 73), not to mention the fact that 'Byron sought, throughout his verse, to establish a consistent philosophy of justice' (p. 73) akin to Derrida's own system of justice. According to Felluga, Byron assumed actual political force because his vision of social-political reality differed so greatly from that of Scott's 'attempted renchantment' (p. 73) of the past in his metrical romances. Felluga also realises Byron's political threat to be intrinsically linked to his ability to recognise 'the tendency to violence in any system, monarchial, capitalist, and revolutionary alike' (p. 73) allowing him to appeal to the political mindset or reality of most every one of his readers.

In giving such close attention to Byron's political ideology as it is presented in his texts and personal political activities, this book represents a decidedly radical departure from the relatively standard critical dismissal, at least in criticism over the last century, of Byron's politics and the focus on his biography. While I wish that Felluga had spent a bit more time flushing out Byron's political ideology and vision of justice (tasks yet to be sufficiently undertaken by any of Byron's contemporary critics), his argument on behalf of Byron as a pertinent political force in the Romantic period is most certainly welcome and appreciated. His positioning of Scott and Byron as opposite, though not entirely disconnected, political and artistic forces during the Romantic period is an intriguing point that reminds us of the crucial role both poets played in both nineteenth century poetry and society.

Felluga concludes the book with a Coda in which he extends his argument into the Victorian period. He argues that Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* was a 'last-ditch effort' (p. 144) to come to terms, however helplessly, with the place of verse in the wake of Byron and Scott and the marginalization of poetry over the previous generation. According to Felluga, after Byron and Scott, Tennyson 'found himself having to negotiate a rather fraught generic form [...] the romance' (p. 147) and wrestle with the question of what poetry was, given that it was a genre that had, due to its virtual rejection as a sufficient political activity, become an 'ontological impossibility' (p. 147), emasculated and rendered subservient, if not entirely irrelevant, to 'realistic' novels.

Aside from the genuine novelty and ingenuity of Felluga's various arguments, one of the book's greatest strengths is the accessibility of its structure and the clarity of its style. Felluga's complex and wide-ranging argument is carefully

crafted over the course of each chapter and manages to successfully carry a tremendous number of interconnected arguments to a logical and entirely sufficient conclusion by the end. While Felluga draws quite heavily from the theoretical schools of Marxism and psychoanalysis over the course of the book, he wields these tools reasonably and intelligently, allowing them to illuminate his arguments rather than make his arguments for him. Felluga is also careful to ground his points firmly in history, supporting each and every point he makes with a plethora of textual and historical examples. *The Perversity of Poetry* is an important book that marks a major contribution to criticism of Romantic and Victorian poetry. It deserves to be read (and reread, perhaps a couple of times over) not only by critics of Byron and Scott but by any reader interested in the history of English poetry. 

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Clíona Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), xi + 221pp. ISBN 1-904-55846-1; £39.95 (hb).

IN THOMAS FLANAGAN'S NOVEL, *The Year of the French* (London, 1980), a young Maria Edgeworth passes close to the scene of a recent massacre of Irish rebels. Unable to see the slaughtered bodies of the rebels pointed out to her, she nevertheless reprimands a young Scottish soldier for not knowing the name of a local hill: 'Things have names, Mr Sinclair, even in this county' (p. 498).

Flanagan's fictional Edgeworth seems to prefigure the Maria Edgeworth who has appeared in some recent accounts of Irish literature. She can seem to be a writer alert to the names of things, capable of giving a superficial account of Ireland, yet fatally short-sighted when it comes to witnessing the larger historical trauma behind the details. Clíona Ó Gallchoir's fine new study of Edgeworth takes issue with recent critics such as Seamus Deane and Kevin Whelan, both of whose assertions that Edgeworth provides illusory accounts of Ireland lead Ó Gallchoir to note that for these critics 'it is a short step from illusion to delusion' (p. 16).

Rather than linking Edgeworth to some constructed national narrative, Ó Gallchoir is more interested in situating her writing in a complex series of negotiations involving women, domesticity, and the public sphere in the Romantic period. As such, this is self-consciously a work of feminist criticism, and this starting point actually allows for a much more liberating reading of Edgeworth, in which the false dichotomy of the 'Irish' Edgeworth (*Castle Rackrent*, *The Absentee*) and the 'English' (*Belinda*, *Patronage*) is erased and replaced with a more straightforward chronological reading. Even Edgeworth's

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



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**James R. Fleming** is a Kirkland PhD Fellow in Victorian and Folklore Studies at the University of Florida. He is a Review Editor and Co-Managing Editor for *ImageText* <<http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/>>. He is currently working on a dissertation tentatively entitled ‘Trauma, Testimony and the English Romantic Movement’ and a study focusing on issues of space, place, and temporality in the works of Jane Austen and Lord Byron.

**Jonathan Hill** is a member of the Department of English, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. His main area of teaching is the British Romantic period, his main research interest Regency culture broadly understood, including graphic satire and book history. This article is part of an ongoing study of books in boards, both British and American.

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His monograph entitled *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts* is forthcoming from Palgrave.

