

ROMANTIC TEXTUALITIES
LITERATURE AND PRINT CULTURE, 1780–1840

(previously 'Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text')



Issue 16

(Summer 2006)

Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research
Cardiff University

Romantic Textualities is available on the web @ www.cf.ac.uk/encap/romtext

ISSN 1748-0116

Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840, 16 (Summer 2006). Online: Internet (date accessed): <www.cf.ac.uk/encap/romtext/issues/rt16.pdf>.

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Published by the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research, Cardiff University.
Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro 11 / 12.5, using Adobe InDesign CS2; images and illustrations prepared using Adobe Illustrator CS2 and Adobe PhotoShop CS2; final output rendered with Adobe Acrobat 7 Professional.


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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.

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. 

James R. Fleming
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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

final novel, *Helen*, so long the Cinderella of her oeuvre, receives a sustained and intelligent analysis.

What Ó Gallchoir says of *Helen* could be used as a summation of her central thesis about Edgeworth's whole canon: '[The novel's] tendency is on the one hand to naturalise established relations of gender and power, but, paradoxically, also to reveal their constructed quality' (p. 163). Her first chapter takes issue with the term 'domesticity', and its imagined opposition to an increasingly masculinised public sphere. Starting with the proposition that the 1790s saw an exponential increase in the number of people entering the modern public sphere in Ireland, Ó Gallchoir argues that Edgeworth was keen on insisting that women had a role to play in that sphere as well. She rightly complicates the notion that there is any simple dichotomy between the public and private, and this allows a reading that opens up the domestic plots of Edgeworth's fiction.

Ó Gallchoir gives due attention to the place of France in Edgeworth's writing as both a source of Enlightened *salon* culture and revolutionary sentiment. The former appears as more of an influence, and Ó Gallchoir rightly spends some time connecting Edgeworth to Madame de Staël. The latter's comments on female writing and its role in relation to public institutions was foundational to Edgeworth's (and Lady Morgan's) self-positioning in a post-revolutionary historical moment. Indeed, it is De Staël who facilitates the thematic continuity Ó Gallchoir finds between the domestic plots of Edgeworth's 'Irish' and 'English' fiction. De Staël's writing (Ó Gallchoir focuses mostly on *De la littérature* and *Corinne*) modified classical Republicanism's insistence on measuring patriotism through public actions, and allowed instead recognition of the role that the domestic setting had in patriotic sentiment (often to the detriment of the 'woman of genius' that is portrayed in her fiction). While De Staël has obvious stylistic and thematic connections with Lady Morgan, it is refreshing to see her taken seriously in a study of Edgeworth. Rather than fall into the trap of allying Edgeworth solely with Burke or the Scottish Enlightenment (both get mentioned of course), Ó Gallchoir covers a lot of useful ground in bringing De Staël into the picture.

There are, of course, problems of space in any survey which tries to deal with so much material. Ironically, Ó Gallchoir's enthusiasm for some of the less well known fiction means that readings of *Belinda* and *Castle Rackrent* can feel somewhat cursory. Given the amount of critical comment these texts have already generated, however, this is not as major a problem as it might seem. By writing on texts such as *Helen*, *Patronage*, *Emilie de Coulanges*, and *Madame de Fleury* (both of which appeared with *Ennui* and *The Absentee* in *Tales of Fashionable Life*), Ó Gallchoir provides a fuller view of Edgeworth's oeuvre. The suggestions provided in this study are sure to provoke further study of Edgeworth's fiction, and the book as a whole suggests that proper accounts

of the role of gender in Irish literature in this period are finally beginning to appear. 

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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.

