

BOOK REVIEWS



Vincent Carretta (ed.), *The Writings of Phillis Wheatley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), lix + 226pp. ISBN 978-0-1988-3499-1; £110 (hb).

PHILLIS WHEATLEY PETERS (1753?–1784) is a name now known to many, due to her remarkable legacy as the first African American woman to have written a book of poetry. Sold into enslavement as a child, Wheatley Peters was transported from Gambia, West Africa to Boston, USA, where she was bought to become a servant for the Wheatley family. Her literary talent was soon discovered and at 18 years old she had twenty-eight poems in preparation for publication. She was emancipated in late 1773 after a trip to London to see the publication of her poetry collection, and died after marriage to John Peters in 1784, whilst her husband was in prison. Her collection, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, was her sole publication, although her later years saw her preparing to publish a second collection. Her untimely death at the age of around thirty-one ensured this was never finished. The manuscript ultimately went missing and has never been recovered.

Although renowned in her day, in the twentieth century Wheatley Peters experienced a revival as the renewed popularity of her poems ensured her place in the canon, alongside being recognised as one of the foremost poets of early transatlantic literature. Editions of her works have previously been published by Julian D. Mason, John C. Shields and Carretta (a Penguin Edition in 2001). In the twenty-first century, interest in Wheatley Peters continues to increase, thanks in part to scholars including Honorée Fanonne Jeffers and Shields, who have reflected on Wheatley Peters both creatively and critically. The poet's life and works have been explored equally, with creative writers such as Jeffers and Alison Clarke's *Phillis* (2020) centring on her life, plus the religious and philosophical upheaval she encountered. Critics have focused most recently on her poetical style, discussions of race and slavery, and her remarkable creative influence on many European Romantic figures, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who it is thought 'borrowed' many of her ideas.

Carretta's edited volume thus contributes to ongoing interest in and scholarship on Wheatley Peters, and completely overwrites previous editions of her works. Indeed, his effort proves the fullest in scope and ambition, by collating the entirety of Wheatley Peters' extant corpus in one volume.¹ Carretta, an expert in eighteenth-century transatlantic authors of African descent, edited Wheatley's works after publishing editions of Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano and Quobna Ottobah Cugoana's writings. He is also the author of the most recent biography of Phillis Wheatley Peters, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a*


Genius in Bondage (2011). As such, Carretta is perfectly placed to provide the extensive notes required for this edition, and to engage with ongoing debates surrounding colonialism and structural racism in study of the long eighteenth century. Indeed, his sensitively drawn allusions to contemporary discussions of race, enslavement and sexism must be recommended.

The collection of Wheatley Peters' writings begins with a carefully researched chronology of the poet's life, before Carretta's comprehensive and informative introduction explores Wheatley Peters' childhood and career, alongside details of her works. Carretta emphasises the manuscript culture Wheatley Peters was part of, circulating her verse to her network of female friends, alongside those in positions of power. Her poem 'To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, on the Death of his Lady. March 24, 1773' Carretta notes was probably distributed privately to Andrew Oliver (1706–74), 'lieutenant governor of Massachusetts' (p. xxvii) following his wife's death. Through references to numerous archival sources, Carretta strikingly demonstrates how Wheatley Peters was 'very active' (pp. xxvi and xxix) in the marketing and promotion of her book of poetry. Indeed, the sense of Wheatley Peters which Carretta conjures is that of a determined and acute woman who knew how to market her work successfully, savvily autographed copies to prevent loss of profits from them being pirated, and actively pursued her own freedom following her trip to London (following Granville Sharp's intervention in 1772 'that no slave brought to England from its colonies could legally be forced to return to them as a slave' [p. xx]).

References to Wheatley Peters' obviously anti-enslavement views are frequent, and Carretta focuses on her race and gender throughout his introduction, culminating in discussions of the poet as a celebrity in London in the 1770s and 1780s. Despite her return to Boston, during this period Wheatley Peters was consistently compared to the bluestocking coterie in general, and Hannah More in particular (p. xxxv), which contemporary colonial reviewers derided. Her gender is significantly alluded to in discussions of her husband, who Carretta appears to suggest stifled Wheatley Peters' creativity and business acumen (owing to the fact that the advertisements for her proposed second book markedly did not include references to Wheatley Peters' maiden name).

The volume then turns to Wheatley Peters' writings. All of her known writings are included in this volume, with some of them, such as a variant of her popular poem 'Hymn to Humanity', located at the Emory University, USA, only recently discovered. Forty-six of the fifty-seven known poems were published in Wheatley Peters' lifetime, and this collection is the first to publish all of these poetical works, alongside their authoritative variants. Carretta has also included all of Wheatley Peters' known prose writings, in the form of twenty-three letters and four subscription proposals. Her writings are presented chronologically so readers can follow Wheatley Peters' creative progression. Only three letters are extant that were written to the poet, and these are also included in the volume. Indeed, the entirety of Wheatley Peters' writings takes up only 144 pages. The remainder of Carretta's work consists of extensively detailed textual and

explanatory notes, which provide historical context, further nuggets of information regarding Wheatley Peter's composition and publication practices, and biographical information concerning those Wheatley Peters writes about and to.

Building on the scholarship of the editions that have come before, including his own, Carretta has created a considered, authoritative, and exciting collection of Wheatley Peters' work. Through the original research into 'new' Wheatley Peters variants, and Carretta's thorough notes, *The Writings of Phillis Wheatley* is truly remarkable in its content and scope and will successfully take its rightful place as a key teaching tool, alongside becoming the new standard text for those interested in Wheatley Peters' work. As interest in Wheatley Peters and her writings continues to increase, it will be interesting to observe whether new manuscript variants, or even her lost second collection will come to light in archives worldwide. If that is the case, I look forward to further work on Wheatley, and future editions of her work, which will undoubtedly build on Carretta's excellent volume. 

NOTES

1. As a side note, it is Jeffers who has stated the case that Wheatley should be referred to as Wheatley Peters. This is because she appears to have chosen to use her husband John Peters' surname, whilst her other names were given to her as a condition of her enslavement; for example, she was named after 'The Phillis' slave ship on which she was transported to America. I have chosen to refer to Wheatley Peters as such for this review.

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Manu Samriti Chander, *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2017), xvi + 179pp. ISBN 978-1-61148-821-0; \$100 (hb).

ONE OF THE SATISFACTIONS of undertaking a 'late' review—four years after first publication—is the opportunity to look back at a work widely reviewed at its appearance and now finding its place in a rapidly developing field. The arresting title of *Brown Romantics* signals Chander's intention to ground his analysis on the opposition of colonial literatures to the canonical works of the Romantic 'imperial centre'. This is achieved by means of three case studies, focusing on the work of H. L. V. Derozio, the 'East Indian' poet of colonial Calcutta; the Afro-Guianese Egbert Martin; and the Australian writer Henry Lawson.

These colonial literatures are more complex than at first might appear, and here both words of the main title repay further investigation. On the epithet 'brown', Chander sets out to 'ironize what might, at face value, be taken as a rather crude descriptor of racial difference', aiming 'by thus calling attention to racial identity, [to] challenge that basis for considering their poetry as a simple expression of it' (p. 3). He advances, therefore, a maximalist, transcultural understanding of marginalisation, which allows him to propose a commonality between his three main exemplars. Derozio, Martin and Lawson are not to be thought of as 'marginalized because they are brown' but "'brown" because they are marginalized' (p. 3). The weight of the burden borne by marginality is exemplified by the case of Lawson, son of a Norwegian–Australian father and an Australian mother, whose initial 'anti-British sentiment' was replaced by a virulent 'antipathy toward the Empire's cultural others' (p. 81). Despite this, Lawson becomes for Chander evidence that it was possible to 'be white and still not be white enough to escape the mark of difference' (p. 91).

The 'Romantics' element of the title similarly is not quite what it first appears to be. The timespan of *Brown Romantics* begins in the latter years of the Romantic period as usually conceived, with Derozio's short life (1809–31), and stretches through Martin's work in the 1880s to end with Lawson in the early decades of the twentieth century. Temporally as well as globally expansive, Chander's approach posits 'Romanticism' as 'a nineteenth-century development but one that happens as dynamic public spheres emerge in other places and define themselves in a fraught relation to the English republic of letters' (p. 12).

This Romanticism, in both its 'English' and its colonial varieties, is male-centred and male-dominated. While current scholarship tends to focus on a broad array of 'Romantic-period' texts and writers, Chander reinscribes the Romantic as the preserve of six male poets, four of whom—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley—provide the book's four epigraphs, as familiar as they are evocative, on the role of the poet (p. 1). Derozio is described as asserting 'the right of a Brown poet to speak as a man within an imagined community founded on cosmopolitan ideals' (p. 9), but Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon hover awkwardly at the edges of this imagined community, each meriting two brief entries each in the index. While locating the Brown Romantics alongside the 'women and working-class writers of the nineteenth century' in a common exclusion from the central category of Romantic poet, Chander briefly entertains the parallels between them:


The aspiring national poet, compulsory native informant and conflicted cosmopolitan are arguably positions that authors such as Felicia Hemans and Anna Laetitia Barbauld assume, even though the role of the nation's literary 'ambassador' [...] was almost invariably figured as that of a man [...] (p. 13)

A degree further out—a shade browner, perhaps—the women of the wider Empire are doubly silenced, as Chander acknowledges when he chooses the figure

of the ‘Dominican poet and educator Salomé Ureña’ to serve as ‘a synecdoche of all the poets necessarily excluded from this study’ (p. 13).

The ‘positional symmetry’ of the relationship between ‘the Brown Romantic and his English counterpart—the White Romantic’ (p. 3) is achieved at the cost of oversimplifying other complexities. Chander notes Derozio’s participation ‘in a cosmopolitan conversation with such men as Moore, Shelley, and Byron’ (p. 30). He does not dwell on the fact that Derozio also participated in other cosmopolitan conversations: with Landon, for instance, whose ‘Improvisatrice’ (1824)—as Chander points out—takes up the theme of *sati*; and also with Emma Roberts, Landon’s contemporary and correspondent, whose own *sati* poem written in India, ‘The Rajah’s Obsequies’ (1830), was seen through the press by Derozio. As Mary Ellis Gibson has argued, Derozio’s *Fakeer of Jungheera* (1828) had a shaping impact on Roberts’s poem, which ‘deliberately triangulates British, Indian, and Anglo-Indian political concerns’.¹ The triangularity of this exchange offers a different kind of symmetry, where the weight of literary influence is more evenly distributed between two points no longer uncomplicatedly to be figured as centre and periphery.

Similarly, while Thomas Moore is lined up alongside Shelley and Byron, recent work such as McCleave and Caraher’s edited collection *Thomas Moore and Romantic Inspiration* (2018) reminds us that his multifaceted output in several genres does not fit easily into any one category. The author of *Lalla Rookh* (1817) was also the writer of *Irish Melodies* and *National Airs*; and the poet whose Irish persona in ‘Corruption’ (1808) might also find a place among the ‘Brown Romantics’: ‘We hear you talk of Britain’s glorious rights, | As weeping slaves, that under hatches lie, | Hear those on deck extol the sun and sky!’²¹ By the time Chander’s Conclusion invokes a ‘Brown Keats’, the categories of brownness and whiteness, centre and margin, Britain (or ‘England’) and the colonies, have become unstable.

This instability could well be described as a strength rather than a weakness of Chander’s work, highlighted by the unexpectedly personal Afterword tracing how the book took shape in the context of its author’s development as a scholar of Romanticism. Among its takeaways for current scholarship is the impulse to re-examine Romantic values, perhaps even the key Romantic value of originality: as Chander writes, ‘the formal characteristics of Brown Romanticism that initially struck the critics as derivative and imitative actually served to expose the Eurocentric racism informing the very tradition in which they wrote’ (p. 91). Above all, though, *Brown Romantics* reminds us of the imperative to read outwards, valuing the cosmopolitan and the hybrid, and seeking ‘new constellations of poets’ to trouble both canonicity and what Chander terms the ‘fantasy of coherent national identity’ (p. 112). 

NOTES

1. Mary Ellis Gibson, *Indian Angles: English Verse in Colonial India from Jones to Tagore* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2011), p. 92.

2. Thomas Moore, *Corruption and Intolerance: Two Poems, with Notes, Addressed to an Englishman by an Irishman* (London: Carpenter, 1808), p. 2.

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Linda Colley, *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions, and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Profile Books, 2021), 512pp. ISBN 978-1-8466-8498-2; £10.99 (pb).

HISTORIAN LINDA COLLEY'S SWEEPING NEW BOOK *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions, and the Making of the Modern World* is over four hundred pages, covers almost four hundred years and spans the globe to show how developments in warfare drove the act of writing constitutions around the world. Colley tells her story at a page-turning pace. She writes that the spread of constitutions from the eighteenth century onwards 'has generally been put down to the impact of revolutions, not war' (p. 4). This orthodox approach, Colley argues, is 'unduly narrowing and mislead[ing]'. She argues instead that changes in warfare led to the writing of constitutions. As Colley anchors this process in war instead of revolution, she divorces constitutions from democracy; some constitutions and democracy go in hand in hand, but it is not taken for granted—by Colley or by the writers of constitutions themselves—that they do. The wide geographic swath and long timeframe of *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen* are essential to Colley's narrative of the central role of war in the creation of political documents that are widely assumed to be based in revolutionary contexts and democratic impulses, but need not be.


Colley scans the globe as she chronicles how war makes constitutions. She first sets her scene in Corsica where she finds Pasquale Paoli 'drafting a ten-page constitution, a term (*costituzione*) he explicitly employed' (p. 18). In Haiti, she locates a political revolution that was 'remarkable' both because it brought about 'a Black-ruled polity equipped with a constitution' and acted as a 'confirmation of trends and developments [of maritime reach] [...] in other regions of the world' (p. 44). Moving to Russia, Colley shows that Catherine the Great was deeply invested in writing a constitution, her *Nakaz*, as a woman monarch determined to secure her own authority amidst the 'shocks and trails of escalating levels of war' (p. 68). In South America, Colley identifies states that were not only writing constitutions, but self-consciously using print and the printing of constitutions as part of their political projects. Colley also locates meaningful constitutional

innovations on Pitcairn Island, in Tahiti, on the Hawaiian Islands, in Tunisia, in Ethiopia and in Japan. France, Britain and America all certainly get some of Colley's attention, but they do not exert a magnetic pull in her narrative; there are too many other places to visit.

Colley's broad geographic reach is part of how she splits off the writing of constitutions from revolution, democracy and state-building. The sheer breadth of places where constitutions were written vividly dramatises the shortcomings of yoking that activity to any specific political project, or version of political causation. The specifics and content of the documents themselves certainly get their due in Colley's hands, but it is the very fact that they were written at all and written in so many places that stands out.

Colley's concerns—war, constitutions and the modern world—are vital today, but *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen* is a densely detailed, fast-moving narrative about the past. Colley begins in 1775: that date might suggest that her jumping off point is the US Constitution, but it is not. In fact, she uses the 1750s, 60s and 70s to chart developments in warfare and the political fallout of warfare. For Colley, these decades show why 'responses to these war-related disturbances and shifts increasingly take the form of new written texts' (p. 55). The Napoleonic Wars are crucial for Colley because the combination of land and naval warfare increased the geographic reach of violence. After the revolutions of 1848 (and the big exception to revolution, England), Colley highlights the sheer volume of violence and reach of warfare in the 1860s. For Colley, the time between the long 1860s and the First World War is a time of 'armed violence', 'audacity' and innovation (p. 400). Her discussion of the First World War emphasises its massive geographic scale, the lethality of the weaponry employed in it and the revolutionary political documents drafted in the wake of cataclysm. When she does turn to today in the Epilogue, she is less concerned with how technology is changing warfare, the importance of non-state actors, conflict below the threshold of war or even resurgent nationalism—any and all of which might be suggested by what came before in the book. Instead, Colley focuses on the fact of writing and the role of print to emphasise how the screen today dominates how people get their political news and engage with politics in our digital age. She also highlights the profound effects of altering political documents to shore up the power of a single individual; she uses Vladimir Putin's changes to the Russian constitution to particular effect.

Colley is British by birth, but teaches at Princeton. For both Britons and Americans, the idea that the political and constitutional order is strained by war should resonate strongly and loudly in a post-9/11 age of the breakdown of historic instruments of power. Jill Lepore sums it up in the *New Yorker*: 'But, for genuine illumination about the promise and the limits of constitutionalism, consider, instead, Colley's Rule: Follow the violence'. Not everyone, however, is as committed to Colley's Rule as Lepore. The *London Review of Books* strips war from its assessment of the text's contemporary resonances: 'The book comes at the right moment. Constitutional storms are massing over the old United

Kingdom'. Colley's book and the rule Lepore finds there is too densely specific and too nuanced to be easily applied to today. The constitutions about which she writes are so varied, they appear in so many places, and so many different kinds of people—reformers, reactionaries, revolutionaries—write them that easy traffic between then and now, the past and today, is inadvisable. Even so, the clarity, simplicity and strength of her argument exert their own force; the temptation is to map yesterday on to today. My own reading of Colley suggests that using her framework in today's context means considering the drafting, revising and doing away with constitutions around the world as responses to political upheavals wrought by an age of ongoing and ever-developing warfare. 

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Richard de Ritter, *Imagining Women Readers, 1789–1820: Well-Regulated Minds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 240pp. ISBN 978-0-7190-9033-2; £80 (hb).

THE SUBTITLE OF RICHARD DE RITTER'S STUDY of women readers, 'well-regulated minds', is drawn from Priscilla Wakefield's *Mental Improvement* (1798), a set of educational dialogues that range across a striking range of topics: from whaling and fisheries, to the uses of trees and metals, and the production of salt, sugar, wool and glass. Mrs Harcourt, one of Wakefield's educational parents, states that 'a well regulated mind is marked by the judicious disposal of time, converting even amusement into instruction' (qtd on p. 8). The relationship between amusement and instruction—between what it means to read at surface-level and deeply; or between reading for pleasure and for moral improvement—is at the centre of de Ritter's study of 'the place of the female reader in British culture between 1789 and 1820' (p. 1). Exploring cultural representations of reading by Anna Lætitia Barbauld, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton, Mary Hays, Hannah More, Charlotte Smith, Jane West, Wakefield, Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen, the book is a welcome addition to existing scholarly work on women's reading, building most of all on Jacqueline Pearson's landmark study, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750–1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (1999). Drawing on previous work on women's lives by Angela Keane, Nancy Armstrong, Harriet Guest and others, De Ritter's main concern is to challenge previous accounts of reading as a predominantly private, domestic activity for women; rather, as 'a form of symbolic labour [...] conceptualised through the discourses of work and professional specialisation',

reading cannot be so easily separated from the public sphere (p. 199). For De Ritter, imagined female readers are 'fractured figures' and 'representing them throws a range of binary oppositions into disarray' (p. 199).

Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of Locke's famous concept of the mind as *tabula rasa*, emphasising how the 'materialist, and significantly bibliographic, image of the mind as 'white paper' implies that the reader and the book are in some ways interchangeable' (p. 17). If the mind is a blank page, then it is both attractively and dangerously open for population by the written pages of purchased books. De Ritter draws our attention to Locke's observation in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706), that '[r]eading furnishes the mind only with the materials of knowledge; it is thinking makes what we read ours'—a distinction that underpins many of the attacks on women's unregulated reading collected throughout the book (quoted p. 18). Tracing Lockean ideas of influence in Thomas Gisborne's popular conduct book, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) as well as instructive articles on reading habits in the *Lady's Magazine*, De Ritter demonstrates how concerns that female readers 'would fail to undertake the labour of active thought as they read' (p. 19) were a product of inherited Enlightenment principles and more recent market developments, as readers gained new access to books through circulating libraries, themselves often soiled and dirtied by use: '[t]he circulating book, the (female) body and the mind imagined as a blank sheet were thus conflated by the potential legibility of their surfaces' (p. 21). The corruption of the *tabula rasa* paradigm by new 'habits of consumption' offers a useful way of approaching Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), a text in open dialogue with Locke. The complication of any easy separation between the female mind and the body is suggestively taken up at the end of the chapter through a turn to Hannah More's criticism of 'shallow' anthologies of 'hackney'd quotations' (p. 41), and her promotion of more diligent reading through images of social utility, moral responsibility and careful labour.

Chapter 2 investigates these 'responsible, labour-intensive modes of reading' in more detail. Staying with More, her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) again warns against 'relaxing reading' and promotes 'invigorating reading': the latter, De Ritter argues, via Burke, imagines reading as 'an act of sublime effort for women', which 'challenges the separation of labour and leisure' (p. 59). Reading itself becomes gothic, 'constantly haunted by the presence of the body' (p. 83). More's stumbling block is how to 'transcend the language of the body: seemingly, at every point at which she extols the labour of the mind, she encounters metaphors of materiality' (p. 62). A similar conservative anxiety about bodies at work can be traced Priscilla Wakefield's *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), which advocates for 'productive' reading by the middle-class woman, but warns that those in what she calls the 'third class', working in manual employment, should avoid


play and novels as 'A BANEFUL POISON' (qtd on p. 70). As De Ritter concludes, 'reading becomes an impediment, rather than a complement, to labour' (p. 70).

If chapter 2 dealt with the potential 'products of reading' (p. 83), chapter 3 turns more overtly to politics in considering of the effects of the French Revolution on educational philosophies developed by Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth in *Practical Education* (1798) and Elizabeth Hamilton in *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (1801–02). As De Ritter points out, 'the pedagogical relationship [...] might be viewed as a microcosmic exploration of the use and abuse of power, and of the reaction it provokes' (p. 91). How best to teach disciplined reading in a post-revolutionary world is a key concern, taken up by the Edgeworths as they move away from Locke's recommendation that parents instil 'fear and awe' in the child in order to have 'first Power over their minds', and towards the cultivation of a more 'sociable domestic environment' (p. 97). The discussion of how the Edgeworths and Hamilton revise and reappraise Locke's educational theories in the aftermath of revolutionary hope and disappointment emphasises the close relationship between educational and political reform. The chapter also returns to Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* to compare Emma's restricted access to books in childhood with William Godwin's promotion of curious, self-directed reading to empower the child in his essay 'Of Choice in Reading' (p. 107), and in doing so illustrates the difficulties in devising a suitable 'ethics of parental authority' in the aftermath of Revolution (p. 11).

Chapter 4 continues with the Edgeworths to investigate 'the extent to which women's internalisation of professional ethics legitimised their reading practices' (p. 134). This chapter engages most closely with Jürgen Habermas's theory of the 'bourgeois public sphere' and its exclusionary implications for women; however, in challenging the distinction between public and private, and advocating for a wider definition of reading as 'symbolic labour', De Ritter's argument is more subtly in conversation with Habermas throughout the book. It is difficult to surpass Harriet Guest's influential reading of Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies* in *Small Change: Women, Learning and Patriotism, 1750–1810* (2000), but there is much to learn from De Ritter's nuanced reading of Edgeworth's representation of 'a somewhat paradoxical state of affairs in which women's "wisdom"—the currency of their social utility—can only be acquired in terms of "leisure"' (p. 139). This forms the background for tracing the promotion of 'leisured wisdom' in *Belinda* (1801), as Belinda's ability to think for herself comes from her concentrated perusal of books in the domestic setting—an 'ethic of intellectual labour' (p. 161), albeit one that remains 'distinctly class-bound' (p. 134).

Chapter 5 turns from intellectual labour to consider the pleasures of the text though a focussed comparison of Barbauld's and Austen's attitudes to novel reading. De Ritter's attention to Barbauld's 'On Female Studies' and 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing' (her introduction to *The British Novelists*) demonstrates how much there is to gain from Barbauld's essay

writing: her vigorous remarks on reading Radcliffe's novels deserve to be better known among scholars of the gothic. Some fascinating parallels emerge between Barbauld's comments on the shame experienced after binge-reading a Radcliffe novel ('once we have read it, it is nothing; we are ashamed of our feelings' [qtd in p. 173]) and *Northanger Abbey*, as both display 'a pattern of narrative pleasure abruptly curtailed by embarrassment and shame' (p. 177). Austen's readers, both imagined and real, have been particularly well served by Katie Halsey's *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945* (2012) and Olivia Murphy's *Jane Austen the Reader: The Artist as Critic* (2013), but De Ritter still has much to offer us here, raising the good question of whether we should assume that Catherine ever finishes *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). For De Ritter, 'this unwritten moment is displaced on to the 'awaken[ing]' Catherine experiences after having been reprimanded by Henry Tilney' (p. 179). While this might seem like a minor plot quibble, the ambiguity surrounding Catherine's progress with *Udolpho* is potentially significant: if 'Austen allows Catherine's reading of that text to continue to flourish in the silent spaces of her novel', then 'the possibility of the reader's pleasure is never foreclosed' (p. 180), and the kind of 'shame' in finishing a gothic novel that De Ritter has shown us in Barbauld is resisted by Austen.

While the focus of the book is clearly on the imagined woman reader, De Ritter incorporates several experiences by readers drawn from diaries and letters, and from the excellent *UK RED: UK Reading Experience Database* <<https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/>>. Chapter 4 also tantalisingly discusses practical access to Bristol Library for women in the 1780s and 1790s (pp. 130–01). These deepen our understanding of the theoretical reader as a construction, but appear relatively infrequently throughout the book, and the distinction between the 'real' and constructed reader could have been more firmly addressed at those points. But this does not lessen the benefits of De Ritter's excellent study, which provides a fascinating account of 'the social and cultural specificity' of women's reading in the Romantic period (p. 2), and how Enlightenment, Revolutionary and economic discourses shaped its metaphors. 

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Hrileena Ghosh, *John Keats' Medical Notebook: Text, Context, and Poems* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 320pp. ISBN 978-1-789-62061-0; £85 (hb)

‘THE POSITION OF THE HAND IN DISSECTING should be the same, as in writing or drawing; and the knife, held, like the pen’ (*The London Dissector*, 1811). John Keats, as a medical student and surgeon’s apprentice at Guy’s Hospital (between October 1815 and March 1817), was thus advised to hold his surgeon’s scalpel exactly as he held his poet’s pen (p. 269). The hand that dissected rotting corpses, handled living bodies in crisis (such as pulling a bullet from a woman’s neck, p. 169), and recorded anatomical details and physiological processes in his medical notebook, was the same ‘living hand, now warm and capable’ that scribbled poetry.¹ Hrileena Ghosh’s book articulates how Keats’ poetic creativity was—inescapably—enabled and enhanced on a practical level through his intricate, intimate knowledge of the physical human body—its fevers, its pulses, its nerves, its sensations. (His medical notebook reveals Keats’ working physiological comprehension of all four: ‘If there be in Fever a determination of Blood to the Head the Pulse will increase’ [p. 46]; and ‘Lectr 10. Physiology of the Nervous System. The 1st office is that of Sensation’ [p. 32].)

Ghosh’s book includes the first annotated transcription of Keats’ medical notebook (pp. 19–86), taken from lectures on ‘Anatomy, and the Operations of Surgery’ by the pre-eminent surgeon of the period, Astley Cooper, at Guy’s Hospital. ‘The source from which Keats derived his medical notes has always been something of a puzzle’, a conundrum that Ghosh solves (pp. 151–56). The only previous edition of Keats’ medical notebook, Maurice Buxton Forman’s from 1934, is not annotated—and, furthermore, it quietly smooths out some of the revealing oddities of the manuscript (that Keats wrote from both the front and back ends of the notebook, for instance [p. 10])—making Ghosh’s expansively annotated edition, which takes care to indicate the distinctive arrangement of Keats’ notes, welcome. Ghosh’s careful explications help guide the reader through the sometimes obscure and complex medical material, while the provision of concise biographical detail and relevant intellectual context of the people mentioned is also helpful. Clear explanations of terminology are not only essential for non-medical literary scholars, the contextualisation of nineteenth-century medical vocabulary will surely be welcomed, too, by those with a knowledge of modern-day medicine.

The extensive contextualisation of Keats’ time at Guy’s Hospital, in the chapters that follow the annotated notebook, adds significantly to our understanding of Keats’ intellectual environment.

So efficacious was the notorious, medically-themed attack in ‘The Cockney School of Poetry IV’—which diagnosed Keats with debilitating metromania and mocked his medical background (‘back to the shop Mr John, back to “plasters, pills, and ointment boxes”, &c.’)¹—that Keats’ nineteenth-century admirers sought to expunge medical elements from their biographies and inter-

pretations of his poetry (pp. 239–41).² Such eschewing has perhaps contributed to traditional accounts of Keats, and understandings of his poetry (and indeed thinking), which characterise him as a poor, apathetic, or even uninterested medical student. Ghosh's book—which builds upon the recent scholarship of Nicholas Roe, John Barnard and Richard Marggraf Turley, as well as Donald Goellnicht—demonstrates conclusively that in fact the opposite was the case. The first chapter's analysis of the notebook, as a bibliographic artefact and working document, argues convincingly that Keats was an engaged, attentive and active student. Contrary to the assertions of earlier, influential critics, such as Walter Jackson Bate (who concluded that Keats' notes show that 'he was either completely indifferent or hopelessly confused' [p. 114]), Ghosh looks beyond the ostensibly chaotic appearance of Keats' notebook, reveals how carefully annotated and cross-referenced the notes actually were, and explains how they illustrate Keats' process of synthesising his learning (which operates as much in his poetry as his notebook).

Chapter 2, 'Guy's Hospital Poetry', considers Keats' poetic writing while he remained at Guy's, in an attempt to establish the relationship between 'Keats' two callings' (p. 119)—Keats as poet and as practising physician. It outlines what Keats' day-to-day life would have been like as a trainee surgeon and dresser: the duties, responsibilities and timetable. Ghosh shows that the role was incredibly hands-on. On 'taking-in day', for instance, a contemporary dresser records that one 'took charge of all the surgical cases, which were received at ten o'clock', including attending to 'all the accidents and cases of hernia', 'dressed hosts of out-patients, drew innumerable teeth, and performed countless venesections [blood lettings]' (p. 121).

Ghosh scrupulously dates Keats's poetic compositions during his time at Guy's (pp. 124–28) and charts his gravitation from the Mathew circle (his 'pre-Guy's poetic friends' [p. 128]), via his re-acquaintance with Charles Cowden Clarke, to his engagement with the Hunt circle ('Joining Hunt's Circle in autumn 1816 lent impetus to Keats' determination to leave his medical training and focus on poetry' [p. 140]). The chapter delineates Keats' afterlife (pp. 130–37), and so places into context the influential and none-too-flattering 1847 account by Henry Stephens, which remains the only first-hand description we have of Keats at Guy's. Stephens was Keats' fellow student and sometime housemate, and would go on to have a long medical career, including publishing treatises on hernias (1829) and cholera (1849). Stephens' report diminishes Keats' medical ambitions and emphasises his poetical 'Aspirations', painting Keats as an arrogant so-and-so who thought 'Medical Knowledge was beneath his attention': 'amongst mere Medical students, he would walk, & talk as one of the Gods might be supposed to do, when mingling with mortals'.³ Stephens recalled his 'surprise' at Keats having passed his licentiate examination first time, a reaction perhaps coloured by that fact that Stephens had not himself achieved this feat (p. 138). Ghosh argues that Stephens' diatribe against 'the Poet John Keats' (the pointed phrase Stephens used at both the opening and

closing of his letter)⁴—should be read against its own contemporary background of post-*Adonais* mythmaking (p. 137).

Ghosh is content to chronicle Keats' two occupations running in parallel, and to focus less on their coalescences. Apart from the intriguing observation that 'I stood tip-toe upon a little Hill' (which was written 'certainly while he was fulfilling his dresser's duties at Guy's') articulates a concern for the heath-giving effects of cooling air (pp. 147–48)—as, for example, in the lines

The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
 And crept through half closed lattices to cure
 The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,
 And soothed them into slumbers full and deep.
 Soon they awoke clear eyed: nor burnt with thirsting,
 Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting:
 And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
 Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight (ll. 221–28)


there is little textual engagement with the poetry itself. The information provided by Ghosh, however, will surely prove invaluable to scholars wishing to undertake such analysis themselves.

Chapter 3, 'Keats' Medical Milieu', will be enriching for readers seeking an account of the intellectual environment that flourished in London's teaching hospitals at the time that Keats was a student; including the Vitalism debates (pp. 162–66); the contention over John Brown's theories of excitability, and the likely rejection by surgeons of a Brunonian system that rendered local interventions—i.e. surgeries—pointless (pp. 166–69); and Cooper's insistence on the importance for medical students of dissecting human corpses ('Dissection alone affords a good practical kno[w]ledge of anatomy'—*The Lectures of Astley P. Cooper Esqr on Surgery*, manuscript qtd on p. 170). The account of the 'Physical Society of Guy's Hospital' and its up-to-date library is particularly illuminating (pp. 158–60).

Keats' medical notebook provides evidence not only of his intellectual development but also of his writerly process, notably his skill in fusing and distilling imagery. Ghosh draws this out particularly in chapter 4, 'Scholar and Poet', by comparing Keats' own concise notes with those of a contemporary, Joshua Waddington, who was a more prosaic notetaker. Waddington's wordy descriptions—for instance, 'Volition does not reside altogether in the Brain but in part in the Spinal Marrow; this is proved by taking off the Head of an Animal, & placing it upon its back, when it will be found to turn upon its Belly; but if you carry a wire down the Spinal Marrow, the animal will cease to have the power of turning itself' (p. 199)—slip easily from the mind when compared with Keats' memorable truncation of the same moment in Cooper's lecture—'Volition [...] does not reside entirely in the Brain but partly in ye spinal Marrow which is seen in the Behaviour of a Frog after having been guilliteened [*sic*]' (p. 35). The chapter articulates how Keats' concision—his 'well-condensed expression', in the words of Horace Smith, or his 'poetical

concentrations' as Leigh Hunt would later put it (p. 197)—was a technique that he developed and honed through the process of medical notetaking.

Ghosh contends persuasively that the way in which Keats' poetry conveys direct evocations of extreme emotional states through specific bodily description is an essential component of 'their enduring vitality' (p. 203); as, for example, in Saturn's 'old right hand [that] lay nerveless, listless, dead, | Unsceptred' in *Hyperion* (pp. 199–201). This physiology of emotion is interrogated more fully, and in specific relation to *Endymion*, in chapter 5, 'The Physiology of Passion'. Here Keats' hospital experience is shown to be reflected in Niobe's 'trembling knee | And frantic gape', which displays a 'Bedlam vision' to use Lord Byron's phrase (pp. 225–26). The depiction of sympathetic 'midnight spirit nurse' Peona, meanwhile, is revealed as congruous with contemporary medical textbooks on ethical conduct; such as, *The Hospital Pupil's Guide, Being Oracular Communications, Addressed to Students of the Medical Profession* (originally 1816), produced by Guy's Hospital, which advocated a similar tending to patients with 'benevolence of disposition and unwearied diligence' (pp. 228–32).

The reader is repeatedly assured that Keats' medical notebook strikingly prefigures aspects of his 'mature' poetry, yet when we arrive at chapter 6, 'The Only State for the Best Sort of Poetry'—which one might anticipate would be the culmination of this enticing line of enquiry (and after an excursion through 'The Biographical Angle' of the production of the 1820 volume, pp. 234–54)—comparatively little space is granted to the poems' exploration (pp. 254–68). This is prone to leave one—with 'A burning forehead, and a parching tongue' ('Ode on a Grecian Urn', l. 30)—wanting more. The analysis that is present is richly suggestive: 'Isabella's anatomically accurate account of the disintegration of Lorenzo's face (that eyelashes remain after eyeballs have rotted [p. 255]); Madeline's 'distracted attention' in 'The Eve of St Agnes' and the narrative voice's 'undistracted attention' in 'Ode to a Nightingale' provoking different kinds of 'waking dream or reverie', as discussed in contemporary medical textbooks such as John and Charles Bell's *The Anatomy and Physiology of the Human Body* (1802–04, pp. 256–60); and the paradox implicit within pharmacological *materia medica*, that deadly toxins and poisons—such as wolfsbane, nightshade, yew-berries, peonies—can be used to cure and restore, which informs Keats' understanding of the ambiguities of 'the melancholy fit' (l. 11) in 'Ode on Melancholy' (pp. 260–68). No doubt, given the obvious importance of this annotated edition and the wealth of contextualising medical material that Ghosh has assembled, further readings on the effects of Keats's medical training on his poetic imagination will spring from this work. As the author tantalisingly suggests, within the medico-poetical vein there is much in Keats' oeuvre that remains 'warm and still to be enjoy'd' ('Ode on a Grecian Urn', l. 26). 

NOTES

1. John Keats, 'This living hand, now warm and capable', in *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. by Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 503 (l. 1).
2. 'Z' [John Gibson Lockhart], 'Cockney School of Poetry IV', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (August 1818), 519–24 (p. 524).
3. Henry Stephens to George Felton Mathew, March[?] 1847, in *Keats Circle*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), II, 206–21 (pp. 208–09).
4. *Ibid.*, II, 206 and 214.

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Daisy Hay, *The Making of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2019), 128pp. ISBN 978-1-8512-4486-7; £12.99 (pb).

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE LITERARY LEGEND *FRANKENSTEIN* was produced during the Genevan summer of 1816 when Mary Shelley was enjoying an evening of ghost stories with friends at Byron's house, the Villa Diodati. Daisy Hay's *The Making of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* celebrates the two hundredth birthday of *Frankenstein* by tracing the journey of Mary Shelley's creation from her manuscripts to pop culture standby. It showcases five chapters, revealing the complex story of the novel's birth through an assemblage of objects and images which are mainly drawn from the collection of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Hay takes a historical approach by tracing the inspiration of the story back to a heterogeneous mixture of things, the material bases which Mary appropriates for literary creation. Hay points out that Mary's novel writing is parallel to Frankenstein's construction of his creature—an assortment of body parts are purloined to form a new whole.


The opening chapter 'Time' gives us an investigation about the external things she internalised and incorporated into her imaginative visions. Hay presents how in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley drew upon ghost stories she read including the anthology *Fantasmagoriana* (1812) and Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816). She also drew on 'a visual grammar of Gothic monstrosity that developed in the second half of the eighteenth century', including paintings by artists Francisco de Goya and Henry Fuseli (p. 21). Hay argues that *Frankenstein* displays scientific ideas Mary percolated in her time. Three interconnected strands of influences on the science of *Frankenstein* are identified: Galvani's

pioneering work in the field of electrophysiology; Erasmus Darwin's 'theory of spontaneous vitality'; and Captain Cook's thwarted 1776 attempt to circumnavigate North America from the Pacific. Importantly, Hay calls attention to the political significance of both gothic and scientific elements in the novel. The monstrousness bore a metaphor for revolutionaries, implying 'first the potential and then the vainglorious corruption of Revolutionary ambition' (p. 26). The public debate about the origins of life can also be framed in political terms—the materialist approach to 'the vital spark of life' denied the supremacy of God, and posed a threat to the hierarchies that prevented Britain from turning into 'anarchy of revolution' (p. 32).

Chapter 2 presents people who exerted influences on Mary Shelley's works via a series of anecdotes. Being the daughter of the disseminator of feminist philosophy Mary Wollstonecraft—the author of *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)—Mary Shelley never got to know her mother in person who died shortly after giving birth. Left in the care of her father, the anarchist William Godwin, and growing up in an unconventional household, she became 'the epitome of a radical idea' (p. 37). She made great use of her literary pedigree and the family's substantial library holdings. Her literary talent and imagination were sustained by the intellectual circle of Romanticists ranging from Coleridge and Wordsworth to Percy Shelley. Hay shows that Mary's works reflect the tangle of voices around her, such as 'the conversational fireworks of Shelley and Byron' (p. 51), Byron's doctor John Polidori's talk about the origins of life, and Matthew Lewis' debate with Byron about slave trade. Mary also conveys her thoughts about parents' responsibilities and reproduction anxieties, which are reminiscent of her real-life experiences such as her loss of children, her mother's death and the suicides of Fanny Imlay and Shelley's estranged wife, Harriet.

The following chapter discusses how Mary adapted the tropes and devices of aesthetic theories in her representations of landscapes and nature. As Hay comments, landscape in Mary's works is 'more than source and setting', but rather made as 'an idea which united the novel's intertwined strands of commentary on creativity, egotism and community' (p. 61). Chapter 4 then concentrates on the manuscripts of *Frankenstein*. Arguments are illustrated with images of the *Frankenstein* Notebook and manuscripts in their original form. *Frankenstein* manuscripts, which are regarded as animate objects, bear a resemblance to Frankenstein's Creature. Yet at the same time, the manuscripts of the novel embody 'a narrative of sociable creation' that differs from 'the model of egotistical creativity depicted in the novel itself' (p. 93).

Daisy Hay's nuanced readings of Mary Shelley's works, combined with photographs of manuscripts, books or physical artefacts from the collection, give readers a vivid picture of Mary Shelley's time and how she translates life into art. As Hay in the concluding chapter argues, *Frankenstein*—as a productive, ethical and political metaphor—articulates the anxieties of an age inundated with emerging technologies, innovations and sudden changes.

Visual iterations and adaptations in today's pop culture make it endure as a reminder of human's extraordinary faculty of imagination and its frightening consequences. 

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Anna Mercer, *The Collaborative Literary Relationship of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (London: Routledge, 2019), 244pp. ISBN 978-0-3672-7795-6; £29.59 (eBook) / £96 (hb).

ROMANTIC SCHOLARS HAVE FREQUENTLY REFERRED to the deep collaborative relationship between Mary and Percy Shelley in the authors' literary pursuits. Anna Mercer's debut monograph, *The Collaborative Literary Relationship of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, reminds us—through the writings of Charles Robinson and Timothy Morton, among others—that this relationship has not been thoughtfully enough considered. Much to the detriment of currently available research on the Shelleys, this deficiency has been 'acknowledged' (p. 3), but not yet fully examined. The introduction to Mercer's work dexterously asserts the extent to which '[t]heir experiences as a literary couple reflect their artistic intimacy', a communion of literary genius that 'provide[s] a beguiling example of how creativity flourishes and develops when provided with the support of an emotional and literary partner' (p. 24). Mercer delivers on her promise to fill a void in our understanding of the Shelleys' working and personal relationship, as well as how the complex and often unfortunate circumstances of their lives together produced inimitable affection and literary success.

Mercer's powerful suggestion that the Percy and Mary Shelley's mutual respect for each other's work engenders an authentically collaborative creative process that flourishes through both their lives. Mercer argues that it is 'evident that the Shelleys engaged in a reciprocal process of creative idea-sharing, drafting, reading, and copying, which had a hugely important effect on the works that they produced' (p. 30). This explicates further upon the extant scholarship on their relationship by making inseparable Mary's influence over her husband's work and his over hers. This theme is consistently drawn throughout Mercer's chapters, the first of which covers the period between 1814 and 1818, by the end of which it becomes increasingly clear how profound a connection they shared in life and creativity. Yet Mercer is careful not to

overdo the implications of their collusion. She writes, 'such intertwined creativity reveals a rich continuity between their works as well as important differences as both authors construct and mould their individual voices as writers, [and] is particularly important to consider' (p. 70), distinctions which become more evident as their lives together mature. Collaboration in their writings, in other words, does not eliminate the subjectivity of either author, but rather strives (almost desperately at times) to enhance, shape and perfect each's subjectivity in both craft and personhood.


Mercer reminds without redundancy that, while in Italy, the Shelleys endured extensive trauma that severely damaged their personal relationship. Existing scholarship contends that they continued to collaborate as a means of reconciling their private hardships; Mercer pushes a bit further. It is exceedingly admirable the methods through which she collects archival evidence to support her argument about the 1818–22 period, that 'the Shelleys provided both supportive, enthusiastic contributions and stimulating challenges to each other's writings' (p. 80). By the end of the chapter, the claim is abundantly clear that the Shelleys' collaborative lives are not merely a reconciliation, but a period of accelerating development and maturation.

Current scholarship tends to emphasise the ways in which their collaboration often bred turbulence, especially as (as individuals) they sought to negotiate and orient the boundaries of their own individualities. This crucial dilemma plays out within the Shelleys' marriage and as they continue their collaborative journeys. Pushing this tension quite a bit further, Mercer notes that 'the Shelleys continued to write and to be present in each other's lives', and that '[e]ven their antagonism in its own way provided creative stimulation' (p. 99). So whether or not Mary and Percy developed any sense of enmity toward one another, even this anxiety was creative. It is not evidently clear in Mercer's argument, however, the magnitude of their shared hostility nor how precisely this antipathy built upon their working relationship. It seems somewhat hasty to presume that a causal link exists between their alienation from one another and their literary output. Yet, the thrust of Mercer's compelling argument does not depend on this point; rather, her diligent readings of the manuscripts of 1818 and 1822 expose a careful erudition and specificity. Their manuscripts and letters demand that the Shelleys' continued to share common interests and practice collaborative efforts throughout these years. Mercer's research insists that, '[w]hile it has long been recognised that PBS revised MWS's writing she, in turn, revised his work, not just to his dictation but probably following discussion with him, perhaps on occasion with his agreement, and sometimes through her own determination' (p. 131). It cannot be overstated how crucial this observation is, especially as it evinces a characterisation of Mary Shelley as a shrewd and forceful editor of her husband's work, an observation upon which the future of Shelleyan and Romantic criticism can assuredly rely.

It is no less important to remark upon the final two chapters of Mercer's book, which consider posthumous editing as a form of collaboration (chapter 4) and the spectral influence of Percy Shelley over Mary's later novels (chapter 5) as further evidence of the inextricability of the Shelleys' creative bonds. After Percy drowned in July of 1822, Mary continued the work of posthumously collecting, editing and publishing his work. This is, of course, an argument of definition, one that has serious implications over the larger umbrella of literary studies. Does Mercer demonstrate that Percy's poetry after his death constitutes what we normally think of as collaboration? I'm not so convinced, but neither would I rule it out. I am most compelled by Mary's own considerations, the language of which indicates a collaborative enthusiasm; she speaks as if Percy were still alive. So, the following claim by Mercer deserves careful scrutiny:

I argue that the term 'collaboration' still applies to the Shelleys' relationship after PBS's demise because MWS's editing produced the first full edition of PBS's works: both of the Shelleys' creative input contributed to the posthumous texts as MWS's role included taking fragmentary, sometimes almost incomprehensible manuscript drafts and providing a version fit for publication. (p. 139).

The merit of this argument rests in Mary's own attitude toward her continued collusion with her husband, even after his passing.

To believe Mary's personal belief in her ongoing collaborative relationship with the now-deceased Percy has enormous implications and potentialities for the study of literature. Mercer here enters a serious debate that extends beyond the Shelleys and the Romantics, one that questions the very definition of collaboration. This wonderfully rhetorical gesture begs further study and evaluation. 

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Kathryn Sutherland (ed.), *Jane Austen: The Chawton Letters* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2017), 128pp. ISBN 978-1-8512-4474-4; £14.99 / \$25 (hb).

IN THIS SUMPTUOUSLY PRINTED SELECTION OF AUSTEN'S LETTERS, Sutherland has encapsulated Austen's gifts as a correspondent. Few match her qualifications to edit such a volume. Scholars of Austen and bibliography are


likely to be familiar with her book *Jane Austen's Textual Lives* (Oxford University Press, 2005), a masterclass is the essential role played by bibliography in literary studies and reception. Sutherland was also project director and principal investigator for *Jane Austen's Fictional Manuscripts*, a digital (and later print) edition of the extant manuscripts of the juvenilia and unfinished works like *Sanditon* and *Lady Susan*. Readers and fans of Austen, however, will recognise Sutherland as a fellow enthusiast. She has written online and in the popular press on the appreciation of Austen, and sharp readers may even recognise her as the editor of several paperbacks, including *Mansfield Park* (Penguin, 2003) and *Teenage Writings* (Oxford World's Classics, 2017).

A selection of letters annotated by Sutherland will have a great deal to interest scholars, though naturally this *libellus* cannot replace the comprehensive collection in Deirdre Le Faye's fourth edition of *Jane Austen's Letters* (Oxford University Press, 2011). But this elegant little book, characterised on its cover as 'a delightful keepsake of correspondence for one of the world's best loved writers', will be read and re-read with perhaps even keener interest by fans and aficionados. Its incisive annotations display a few of the many delights found in the full correspondence of Austen. The book is beautiful not only for the prose style of the letters themselves and for Sutherland's adroit commentary, but also for its facsimile reproductions of the letters in Austen's manuscript handwriting. The regularity of her hand slowly uncovers the fluidity of her expression—in the sections reproduced here, there are very few words or phrases crossed out, and similarly few later additions. Austen's flow of ideas is here as deliberate, straightforward and measured as her handwriting.

The thirteen letters included in this volume were composed on a variety of different occasions, and allow readers to observe the many purposes served by familiar letters in Austen's time. Among the eleven by Austen herself, seven are to her sister Cassandra, her most intimate confidante. In these letters, the reserve of the novels, where her voice is omnipresent yet nearly inscrutable, a *deus absconditus* discerned only in the effect, never the cause—disappears, and Austen can be observed at her most unguarded. Two are epistles in verse, poems written to congratulate: her brother Henry, posted overseas, on the birth of his son, and her friend Catherine Bigg, on her marriage. Two are to James Stanier Clarke, domestic chaplain and librarian to the Prince Regent, including one that was written but never posted. With a reply of Stanier's own, these three letters form a group that includes her famous (but not sent) description of her art. In reply to his presumptive suggestion that she write a historical romance on the House of Saxe-Coburg, with the implied imprimatur of the Prince Regent himself, Austen declines. She insists on writing 'such pictures of domestic Life in Country Villages as I deal in', and defends the integrity of her artistic vision with ironic humility: 'I could no more write a Romance than an Epic Poem [...] No—I must keep to my own style & go on in my own way;—and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other' (pp. 118–19). The final letter

is from Cassandra to Austen's beloved niece Fanny Knight, where she relates the details of her sister's funeral with moving pathos. Cassandra is grateful in detail for the comforts of family and religion, but the letter itself must be consulted in order to conceive the irreplaceable loss that Cassandra felt.

In the letters to Cassandra included here, readers can observe the author juggling the seemingly mundane and trivial duties of communicating 'mere' news with the demands of a muse that identified the essential disclosure that the 'merest' of news might convey. In both the introduction and commentary, Sutherland compares Austen's letter to Cassandra, dated 29 January 1813, with the loquacious chatter of Miss Bates in *Emma*. The talkative spinster becomes a cipher for Austen herself, in Sutherland's reading, and this re-evaluation of Miss Bates's status asks readers to reevaluate the novel itself in light of Austen's correspondence. Sutherland's circumspect notation of the parallels allows the reader to speculate about the manner by which Austen transformed experience into art. But it also encourages speculation about the extent to which Austen deprecated herself in these fictional representations of her own epistolary practice. The web of these parallels and equivocations between the novels and the letters merely complicates the act of interpretation required by such intertextual reading.

The editorial work and notes by Sutherland helps the reader to gather these various textures of language into something like an Austenian voice. At the same time, however, these notes paradoxically scatter these traces of her voice across characters and narratives that can seem self-contradictory and even incoherent. The close parallels between Austen's letters and Miss Bates from *Emma* provide a perfect example—such parallels can even seem to disrupt the image of Austen derived from the novels alone. Perhaps the signal achievement of Sutherland's volume is not the encompassing of seemingly incompatible modes of speech and writing into a single authorial mode, but prompting us to recognise that Austen worked in human expression, where context can make trivial things serious and even profound. 

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Angela Wright, *Mary Shelley, Gothic Authors: Critical Revisions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 192pp. ISBN 978-1-7868-3173-6; £24.99 (pb).

THE RADICAL PURPOSE OF ANGELA WRIGHT'S BOLD NEW BOOK, *Mary Shelley*, is 'to significantly revise our understanding of [Shelley's] engagement with the Gothic' through examining 'a broader range of her works than have to date been included in the Gothic canon' (p. 1). Wright suggests that themes emerging from *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) recur throughout Shelley's subsequent writings (p. 2), which Wright urges readers not to overlook. Her compelling examination of these neglected texts makes a persuasive case for considering how the gothic permeates the writing of Mary Shelley beyond the work with which she has become synonymous.

Building on her useful chronology of Shelley's life, Wright investigates how her 'unique and exceptional literary heritage' was shaped by her parents Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley and architects of the gothic like Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, who all became components of her 'literary imagination' (p. 12). Wright juxtaposes the 'striking originality' of Shelley's childhood compositions with her self-confessed skill as a 'close imitator', and this fusion of emulation and innovation in her work is one which Wright carefully, and rewardingly, threads throughout the text.

Although the argument here is that Shelley's fascination with the gothic was not limited to *Frankenstein*, her foundational work is an apt starting point. In chapter 1, Wright conducts a sophisticated reading of the novel and the ways in which it 'seeks to expose the limitations of story-telling and of language itself' (p. 20). She teases out the dichotomies underlying the text—external and internal, scientific and supernatural, horror and terror—and the 'liminal spaces' which separate them (p. 21). The creature is mired in liminality: he is nameless because he is 'ultimately undefinable' (p. 26), and so embodies the gothic's quest to investigate the 'inexpressible and contradictory impulses of human nature' (p. 32). Exploring as it does the 'uncharted elements of human character, the space where a soul might reside' (p. 35), the novel may be considered a search for the source—of life, of inheritance, of self.

All three are persistently denied, however, to the women of *Frankenstein*. 'Who writes this, and why does it matter?', is a question which Wright stresses must be asked of any text (p. 44). This is where her book is at its most powerful, spotlighting Shelley's metatextual focus on women's invisible endeavours: writing, editing and curating manuscripts. This was a labour which Shelley knew well, as Anna Mercer has since detailed in her monograph, *The Collaborative Literary Relationship of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (2019). Margaret Walton Saville, who notably bears Shelley's initials, 'collate[s] and curate[s]' the documents that tell the story (p. 45). Wright persuasively asserts that Shelley's 'most transformative' advancement is in framing women as the 'source of rational judgment and authorship', and calls

on us to participate in what she terms 'the Gothic quest of *Frankenstein*' by following Margaret's editorial lead (pp. 48–49).

Incest was not uncommon in gothic fiction of the time (see: the collected works of Horace Walpole), but the 'reciprocity' of the proto-Freudian desire in *Matilda* made it scandalous. In Chapters 2 and 3, Wright explores how the novel's titular heroine, as both an investigator and unveiler of secrets, exerts 'a strong sense of agency' in a way which '[r]evers[es] *Frankenstein*'s particularly masculine narrative' (pp. 63–64). She contends that women writers like Shelley, Jane Austen and Ann Radcliffe, 'renegotiated the porous boundaries of romance, historical novel and "Gothic Story" in order to explore the hidden, often Gothic histories of women' (p. 68). What might be termed Shelley's 'radical gothic' foregrounds the lived experiences of women that might otherwise have been lost, giving women chroniclers like herself the space to express their traumas, their passions and their ambitions. This is apparent in *Matilda*, and also in *Valperga* through its dual heroines, Euthanasia and Beatrice, the latter of whom is not easily categorised as either 'tragic heroine' or 'female devil' (p. 82). Wright brilliantly conveys how Shelley reframes female friendship as a mutually healing bond: Euthanasia ensures that through her testimony the 'tale of two uncelebrated women' survives, and thus 'challenges [the] Gothic narrative' that only material possessions are worthy inheritances (p. 87).

Chapter 4 scrutinises Shelley's cathartic process of writing through grief, exemplified by her essay 'On Ghosts' (1824) and her dystopian novel *The Last Man* (1826), written after the deaths of Percy, Lord Byron and three of her children. The latter manifests grief as an apocalyptic landscape: a barren and unending desert that must be traversed and ultimately moved beyond (pp. 93–95). Through the writing of this novel, Shelley is arguably engaging in what we might assume the creature is doing after *Frankenstein* ends: evolving and transforming through grief. 'On Ghosts' is her articulation of this 'dynamic' process.

Wright identifies Shelley's subtle, subtextual refusal to pit women against each other (p. 99), instead portraying women as uncompetitive, independent and mutually supportive in contrast to the antagonistic, and ultimately destructive, fruits of ruthless male ambition. For Wright, '[t]he governing act of editorship provides a strong thematic link between *Frankenstein*, *Valperga* and *The Last Man*', wherein 'the final authoritative manuscript comes from the pen of a female' (p. 107). Chapter 5 traces this throughout later works, such as *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), which embody her 'repositioning' of the oft-forgotten heroine (pp. 109–10). The revised 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* transforms Elizabeth Lavenza, Victor's cousin in the 1818 original, into an orphan 'gifted' to Victor by his mother. This change vividly underscores 'the terrors of the disposability of the female' (pp. 113–14). The doubles in these texts, antagonistic to the male characters therein, also work to 'relegat[e] the females to the margins' (p. 118). Shelley powerfully redresses this 'through the transformative experiences of female friendship' (p. 125).

Mary Shelley once modestly said, ‘I cannot *teach*—I can only *paint*’ (qtd on p. 121). In essence, she—like Wright—does both. Wright’s book succeeds in painting a ‘truer picture’ of Shelley that offers both an excellent introduction and a bold and sagacious contribution to scholarship on one of gothic fiction’s finest innovators.

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