

Marion Sherwood and Rosalind Boyce, *Letters and Lives of the Tennyson Women* (London, New York, Dublin: Bloomsbury, 2023), 240 pp. ISBN 978-1-35016-824-4; £76.50 (hb).

EVER SINCE I WAS GIVEN A COPY of Charlotte Mosley's *The Mitfords: Letters between Six Sisters* (2007), I have been fascinated by books that focus on, and analyse, correspondence of any kind. It is a powerful thing to know that you are reading something so highly personal with a direct connection to the writer that displays not only facts and specific instances in their life but reveals, through its language, a historicism of style and content. Whether you are reading for academic purposes or for pleasure, letters provide clues to the society and environs in which the sender and receiver lived, as well as signposting, in the case of these Tennyson women, the strictures which the same society places on them.


Letters and Lives of the Tennyson Women by Marion Sherwood and Rosalind Boyce, goes further than that. For anyone interested in Alfred Tennyson, this book is what in cinematic terms would be known as the prequel to the origin story! Sherwood and Boyce have vividly painted the incredible, yet somehow still ordinary, lives of these four women: the poet's paternal grandmother, Mary Tennyson (known to young Alfred as 'Grandmamma Tennyson'); her daughters Elizabeth Russell (Alfred's mother) and Mary Bourne; and her daughter-in-law Frances Tennyson (later Tennyson d'Eyncourt).

For anyone new to the Tennyson women, or indeed Tennyson himself, the in-depth Timeline (pp. vii–xi) and Tennyson Family Tree (p. xi) will prove invaluable in helping to remove these four women from the prequel and give them top billing as an 'inseparable part of the young poet's life' (p. 1).

Sherwood and Boyce, in their annotated extracts from the letters, have created a literary, historical and at times sociological illustration of the lives of these eighteenth-century women. With excerpts ranging from the polite 'thank you' note to concerns relating to the Tennyson family's medical issues, they paint a picture of an unequal situation for all four women, whose everyday lives were governed by a male-dominated society in a political environment that granted women no reproductive, marital or voting rights. Combined with Sherwood and Boyce's annotations, the letters connect the colourful lives of these engaging correspondents and, alongside the Timeline and Family Tree, equip the reader to piece together how these Tennyson women provided a strong female foundation to Alfred's life and his written works.

Perhaps most intriguing is the book's preoccupation with matters of health. For example, Mary's concern over the family's digestive health, something Alfred would inherit, is a prevalent theme throughout: 'I charge him not to neglect the proper state of his Bowels [...] I wish you could now both breathe and all your children the pure air' (p. 126). The polluted atmosphere of London no doubt contributed to Mary's concern over the lack of clean air! Alongside Sherwood and Boyce's enlightening notes, it is these small details that pinpoint the Tennyson women's everyday concerns within their broader historical context.

For any scholar studying an individual poet or writer, a book like this can prove invaluable. The nuances of family life, the style of writing and the concern over practical matters—such as ‘fabric for mourning clothes’ (p. 42) or dresses for young boys that were worn ‘until they were toilet trained and ‘breeched’, usually between the ages of two and eight’ (p. 174)—provide key background knowledge to the lives of a certain strata of society in the eighteenth century. Behind all of this is the anguish of women who, whilst holding together a family, have to deal with loss, adoption and gynaecological problems.

For anyone interested in Alfred Tennyson this book is a must-read, as this strong female influence must, as Sherwood and Boyce have here, be recognised! 

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Joanna E. Taylor and Ian N. Gregory, *Deep Mapping the Literary Lake District: A Geographical Text Analysis* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2022), 290 pp. ISBN 978-1-6844-8375-4, \$49.95 (pb).

DEEP MAPPING THE LITERARY LAKE DISTRICT is an exciting exploration of how digital tools can enhance our understanding of the literary and cultural heritage of a specific geographic location. Co-authored by Joanna E. Taylor and Ian N. Gregory, this book offers a comprehensive case study of the Lake District and draws from written representations of the region published in the period between 1622 to 1900. The corpus not only includes usual suspects like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, but also less canonical authors such as Harriet Martineau. In doing so, Taylor and Gregory move beyond the strictly ‘literary’ as we understand it today and incorporate a wide array of texts, ranging from poetry to tourist guides and travel accounts to examine how humans have understood, experienced and represented the landscape.

Combining methods from literary studies, corpus linguistics and Geographical Information Science (GIS), the book compellingly argues how ‘deep mapping’ can allow a more nuanced and layered understanding of the Lake District. Rather than simply identifying landmarks, deep mapping enables a broader engagement with the cultural and historical significance of the Lake District. The geographical text analysis affords new insights into the relationships between language and space. It allows for instance the creation of maps showing the spatial distribution of specific words throughout the corpus. Distant reading thus brings patterns,

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



Valentina Aparicio is Education and Recognition Adviser at Queen Mary University of London. Her research focuses on global Romanticism and the politics of race and nation, particularly in Latin America and Britain. She has written on Robert Southey's works on Brazil, as well as on the traveller Maria Graham, and the intellectual José María Blanco White. In 2022 she was awarded the Carl H. Pforzheimer Grant (Keats–Shelley Association of America), and she has also received funding from the Royal Historical Society, the British Association for Romantic Studies and the Chilean Ministry of Education. Valentina has published articles in *European Romantic Review*, *Essays in Romanticism* and *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo*. She is currently working on her first monograph titled *Robert Southey's Latin American and Caribbean Works: The Setting Sun of Empire*.

Michael Bradshaw has published extensively on late Romantic writing, including Beddoes, Darley, Hood and the Shelleys. He is the co-editor, with Ute Berns, of *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Lovell Beddoes* (2007), editor of *Disabling Romanticism: Body, Mind, and Text* (2016), and co-editor, with Gioia Angeletti of "Travel, Migration, Exile, a special issue of the journal *La questione Romantica* (2024). His research interests include literatures of the body, critical disability studies, textual fragmentation and modern allusion to Romantic poetry. Michael is Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Winchester.

Anjeli Chapman Wolf studied *Punch Magazine* around the *fin de siècle* through a postcolonial lens at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge. Her undergraduate degree is from Vanderbilt University, where she completed an Honours Dissertation on postpartum depression in women of colour. Her invited talks include Cambridge's History of Memory & Emotion and Modern British History workshops as well as the 2023 Winter School in Saas-Fee, jointly run by Cambridge and the Adolphe Merkle Institute. Her postcolonial play *Siege*, which illustrates the horror of British imperial rule in twentieth-century India, was chosen to be workshopped with the Royal Court. Her anthology of short fiction, *Spite*, was published in 2024 by Wrong Publishing.

(Mary) Geraldine Coleman is a postgraduate student at the University of Glasgow, working on an MPhil (Research) in Scottish Literature. The subject of her dissertation is the poet, writer and critic Edwin Muir, examining his life in,

and relationship with, Glasgow. Geraldine came to university later in life and graduated in June 2023 with an MA (Hons) in Scottish Literature and is a former President (2022–2023) of the University of Glasgow, Scottish Literature Society.

Colette Davies was awarded her PhD by the University of Nottingham in 2022 for her thesis, ‘Women Writers, Authorship, and the Late Eighteenth-Century Novel: Representations of the Female Author in the Minerva Press (1785–1800)’. Between 2018 and 2022 she was one of the Postgraduate Representatives for the British Association for Romantic Studies and co-organised the 2020 ‘Romantic Futurities’ BARS Early Career and Postgraduate Conference. She was a co-contributor for the ‘Romantic Novel’ section of the *Year’s Work in English Studies* (2020–2021) and has co-edited a special edition and written an article for *Romanticism on the Net* (2021). She is now a Knowledge Exchange and Impact Manager at the University of Nottingham, and enjoys working with academics and external partners to develop and realise external engagement with and the impacts of research.

Emily J. Dolive currently teaches at Eastside Catholic School in Seattle, after completing her PhD in English at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a two-year Postdoctoral Fellowship at Baylor University. Her dissertation and book project, ‘Staking Out Space: British Women’s War Poetry, 1780–1840’ examines how women poets navigated and reshaped the literary marketplace during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Her newest work places Mary Robinson’s poetry and politics in dialogue with John Thelwall and is forthcoming in the *European Romantic Review*.

John-Erik Hansson is lecturer in British History at Université Paris Cité, member of the Echelles (UMR 8264) research unit and reviews editor of the *Anarchist Studies* journal. He is a specialist of the intellectual and cultural history of political radicalism, from the late eighteenth century to today. In particular, he has worked on William Godwin and his circle, with a special interest in the links between radicalism and the diversity of genre of writings, from philosophical treatises to children’s books. More recently, he has worked with Matthew Adams on Godwin’s twentieth-century reputation as a precursor of anarchism, to rethink the ways in which anarchists have (re-)constructed their own histories.

Kevin Hutchings is a professor in the Department of English at the University of Northern British Columbia, where he holds a University Research Chair and chairs the Research Committee in the Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities. He is the author of *Transatlantic Upper Canada: Portraits in Literature, Land, and British–Indigenous Relations* (2020), *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British Atlantic World* (2009) and *Imagining Nature: Blake’s Environmental Poetics* (2002). He is also co-editor of *Transatlantic Literary Ecologies* (with John Miller, 2017), *Transatlantic*