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Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry by Barbara M. Benedict. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Pp. ix + 311. $45.00 cloth.

At the outset of her new book, Barbara M. Benedict characterizes her study as an exploration of "the representation of curiosity, of curiosities, and of curious people" (1) in England in the eighteenth century. She sells herself a bit short. As her book amply demonstrates, "curiosity" is less an idea about which one makes representations than a cultural *activity.* Curiosity is inquiry itself. Benedict is much nearer the mark when, in her conclusion, she says that her book has explored "how English culture negotiates the subversiveness of asking and the lawlessness of the intellectual ambition to know more" (245). "Negotiates," whether or not it is precisely the right verb, is at least a verb and thus captures the sheer dynamism of the activity of curiosity. As does, in fact, Benedict's book itself. To be sure, the book has a good deal to say about how the curious—virtuosi, novelists, journalists, impertinent women, collectors, connoisseurs, and so on—were represented. But its real value lies in its documenting how thoroughly England became a culture of inquiry in the eighteenth century and in its detailing the complex, often vexing and obscure ways curiosity pursued its objects.

From the beginning of the period, curiosity was prized, and it became more and more so as the century advanced, in part because it was associated with an empirical bent of mind, in part because new social opportunities and a new commercial culture answered to curiosity's desire for novelty and for the personal, intellectual, and moral development that curious people claimed they sought. Yet, even as it became increasingly esteemed, it always had an air of menace. In its restless exploration of new realities, curiosity was dangerous, subversive. It undermined the status quo. By definition, it was motivated by a discontent with what one knew or with what one was. Its essence was ambition.

Curiosity and curious people were ridiculed and revered, praised and denigrated, and often they were both praised and denigrated at once. Conservatives, who saw inquiry in many of its modern manifestations as a threat to traditional values, portrayed curious people as violating fundamental standards; as seeking to establish power over others; and as usurping public meaning for their own private use and pleasure and for their own prestige and advancement. Others eagerly embraced curiosity as a way of sanctioning their pursuits. Scientists and virtuosi, to take the most obvious examples, espoused a curiosity they defined as a disinterested search for the truth. But journalists also rallied under this banner of curiosity; they, too, were hungry for knowledge, and like the scientists, just as disinterested, or so they claimed. And, of

course, those who wrote novels—whose very name registers the breathless pursuit of the new that animated curious authors and audiences alike—justified their activity by appealing to curiosity.

And so, curiosity was seen as potentially both heroic and subversive. While one might want to ridicule a particular expression of curiosity, he would be careful of dismissing curiosity root and branch. It simply had too much prestige as a cultural value. On the other hand, one wouldn't want to embrace curiosity uncritically. It was touted by too many people with too many agendas, many of which were disreputable, unacceptable, or downright stupid. For these reasons, inquiry came to have a "competitive dynamic" (154) in this period: one tried to delegitimize certain forms of curiosity by representing them as degenerate (allied with gossip, sexual inquisitiveness, mindless spectacle) and to legitimize one's own projects by claiming that they were driven by the search for truth, the desire for social reform, and so on. Benedict never lets us lose sight of the fact that throughout the period, the meaning of curiosity was defined, contested, re-defined, its boundaries drawn, disputed, and redrawn, as inquisitive people engaged in a struggle over what the correct aim and proper objects of curiosity were, each attempting to co-opt its cultural authority and regulate its signification to make it serve one's own purposes.

Although Benedict does not write an unbroken narrative of the progress of curiosity, choosing rather to investigate "clusters" of "events and literary texts that express specific conceptions of curiosity at particular times" (20), she selects her clusters with enough care to give us a good picture of its general career. Curiosity in its modern sense emerged during the Restoration from the earlier idea of "wonder," shaped by the pressure of empiricism and the new science. Scientists appealed to a curiosity circumscribed by rigorous method and meticulous experimentation. Curiosity soon gained such currency that even writers of travelogues and wonder literature began to discipline their own inquiry along similar lines (played out in a demotic register as common sense, support by physical evidence, and a skeptical stance) in order to make their own claims credible, and the language of curiosity began to infiltrate more and more niches in the culture—in advertisements, for instance, and even in witch narratives.

By the 1720s, "curiosity . . . defined the fashionable personality itself." "This new man looked beyond himself, out toward fresh horizons, conquering, collecting, and classifying phenomena from a range of new social, physical, and geographical worlds, all replete with objects for analysis and control. Language, ideas, even morality itself were reified by print into items for manipulation" (71). Journalists and periodical writers such as Dunton, Addison, Steele, and Defoe broadened the scope of legitimate inquiry by moving it from the scientific observation of nature to the examination of society, and they

were eager to legitimize their curiosity by distinguishing it from such undisciplined forms as gossip and licentiousness and by insisting that their inquiry was in the service of social analysis and social reform. They celebrated what curiosity could bring—social mobility. "Curiosity . . . begins to mark those whose intellectual ambitions objectify the world and lift them above the mob" (92). At its furthest reaches, this "new personality" became the ground of modern subjectivity itself, a subjectivity perfectly portrayed by Defoe in the protagonist of *Robinson Crusoe*: "a selfhood projected outward, explaining phenomena beyond the inquiring self, not reflective except insofar as the self can be objectified as an item for analysis," a selfhood embodying a new self-identity in which people "shrug off traditional contexts and envelop new ones with a limitless flexibility that defines them only by movement. . . . This movement enacts their survival, a survival that, although physical, depends on a mental appetite to explore, to exploit, to know, to conquer" (116).

But if curiosity and the "new personality" were eagerly embraced by some, others were much more skeptical. In the Restoration, Shadwell, Behn, and Samuel Butler satirized curiosity (especially that of the scientists) as self-deception and self-promotion. For many writers in the 1720s, the "new personality" not only threatened humanistic values but represented all the excesses and wrong directions of modernity itself. The curious person consumed information, novelty, acquisitions, and experience voraciously, and satirists like Swift and Pope saw the curious as driven by an egocentric possessiveness that reduced everything—civic, moral and aesthetic values and even other people—to material things. And because in their possessiveness and materialism the curious transformed themselves into something less than human and because in their overweening pursuit of the new they donned and doffed new identities moment by moment, the satirists drew from one of the period's most pervasive sites of curiosity—exhibitions—a metaphor for this new personality: the monster. Thus, if Crusoe is the heroic face of curiosity, its irrational and foolish face can be seen in Gulliver, whose monstrous and fragmented self dramatized misgivings many had about unregulated curiosity.

In spite of these misgivings, by mid-century curiosity was well on its way to becoming firmly established as a cultural norm. A curious person was a superior person. Collecting, widely ridiculed in the Restoration, became praiseworthy. The mid-eighteenth century became an age of connoisseurship. In one sense, the connoisseur was a direct outgrowth of that earlier exemplar of curiosity, the scientist; connoisseurs simply turned their inquiry from nature to social, historical, and literary matters and took on to themselves those attributes earlier associated with the scientist, "the ideal of encyclopedic knowledge as privileged, rarified, and authoritative judgment" (160). But the transformation from scientist to connoisseur involved profound shifts in the

activity of inquiry. In the Restoration, physical objects were collected by scientists and, perforce, the collector was wealthy and usually one of the elite. But as collecting became connoisseurship, the objects upon which curiosity operated were internalized and dematerialized, and anyone could become a connoisseur—a discriminating collector not of material objects but of observations, experiences, and the facts of immaterial culture. This "collecting" of experience encouraged other, more transgressive forms of inquiry and curiosity. More and more women used journalism and especially the novel (which provided a "cultural space for . . . female ambition, with its gendered social spying and its discourse of gossip" [139]) as legitimate venues of female curiosity, venues in which they could explore sexual and social themes relevant to women. Sentimentalism and the Gothic embraced curiosity in order to justify inviting their readers to indulge in fantasies of power and to explore forbidden (especially sexual) areas. By the end of the century, the liberalizing and democratization of inquiry "offered a rich form of resistance to the cultural march toward systematization, classification, and the regulation of morality and social behavior" (202). The mantle of curiosity was being claimed by almost everyone. The most sophisticated literature, as Benedict points out, represented curiosity as a virtuous activity allied with progress, but so too did circuses, which staged popular spectacles and defended them as "enlightened" and "scientific."

For those who found curiosity to be somewhat menacing, its threat began to take on class overtones. As curiosity began to spread to more and more endeavors, as it was pursued by more and more people, the social watchdogs attacked it with a new urgency as a sign of illegitimate social ambition. They worried about how the laboring classes were misusing their leisure. They sought to "prevent the indiscriminate spread of the power of social advancement through information to anyone, or any group, who asked questions" (159). But, as always, curiosity was such an estimable value, it could not be rejected outright. So the writers redefined and redirected it. They represented popular curiosity as credulity; learned curiosity (particularly as practiced by the social watchdogs themselves) was pictured as skepticism and individuality. Thus if curiosity was condemned as self-serving ambition in those of a lower station, the very works that condemned it touted curious people as reformers—if they were elite.

And so, from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the end, curiosity was "the anxious subject of conflicting, emerging views of humanity, culture, and nature" and consequently was always informed by "competing cultural representations" (22) as individuals and groups struggled to possess, reject, define, and reformulate it.

Benedict's portrait of curiosity in the eighteenth century is complex (much more complex than I have space to present it here) and rich in detail,

and though I am persuaded of the truth of her overarching argument, I was not always persuaded by some of her specific discussions. In their eagerness to ferret out the great variety of ways in which curiosity manifested itself in the period, she sometimes finds it where it isn't. A single brief example. Her analysis of *Robinson Crusoe* is based on her belief that Crusoe is driven by curiosity. Now, Crusoe has a number of virtues, but curiosity is not among the most prominent (he has, according to Defoe, "a great Desire to make a more perfect Discovery of the Island" only after he has been marooned there for ten months, and his curiosity about his environment peters out pretty quickly). There are other explanations for Crusoe's restlessness (innate depravity, acquisitiveness, an impulse to dominate) which not only make more sense of his character but which are more cogent given the religious, economic, and colonialist preoccupations of the novel.

I could cite other moments when I was equally unpersuaded, but for me, and I suspect for most readers, these are greatly outweighed by those instances that are wholly convincing. And anyway, these are defects of the book's virtue. For the appeal of *Curiosity* is its sheer intellectual enthusiasm and energy, an enthusiasm and energy that take us into innumerable nooks and crannies of English culture. The eighteenth century *was* a curious century, and Benedict shows us that curiosity cropped up everywhere: in novels, satiric poetry and drama, journalism, trial transcripts, prints (the book has numerous illustrations), and reports of scientific experiments; in tales of Bluebeard; in hoaxes such as Mary Toft, Elizabeth Canning, the Bottle Conjuror, and the Cock Lane Ghost; in museums, exhibitions, and cabinets of curiosities; in works by Shadwell, Cavendish, Behn, Manley, Haywood, Swift, Pope, Defoe, Walpole, Beckford, Samuel Johnson, Radcliffe, Godwin, and Mary Shelley; in the birth of the circus and exhibitions of learned animals; in hot-air ballooning. *Curiosity* is worth reading for its richness alone.

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Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution by James Holstun. London and New York: Verso Press, 2000. Pp. xix + 460. $40.00 cloth.

Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution is an ambitious, witty and provocative book. It is as much a polemical attack on strands in contemporary scholarship as an account of radical action in the English Revolution, for Holstun demands readers think beyond the familiar oppositions: Roundheads vs. Royalsts; Puritans vs. Bishops; Parliament vs. King. As one of its

stars, Gerard Winstanley, put it, "No priest, no king; no king, no judge; no judge, no landlord; no landlord, no priest" (410), an utterly radical extension of James Stuart's "No bishop, no king" rejoinder to calls for ecclesiastical reform. Populated by heroes (Jean-Paul Sartre, Christopher Hill, the British Marxist historians, Ernest Bloch, Jurgen Habermas) and villains (Michel Foucault, a plethora of new historicists, and a dragons' mouthful of revisionists), Holstun's book offers rich readings in early modern English political culture that are bound to interest a range of scholars from the disciplines of literature and history. Mounting a powerful defense of "pre-post Marxist" interpretation, Holstun challenges new historicists in literary studies and revisionists in history to consider the ethical norms and political subtexts of their work. It should be required reading for those wishing to do politically-alert criticism.

The book pursues two related theses. First, that the English Revolution was both cause and consequence of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Second, that the English Revolution may be understood as a class struggle, a "struggle among various groups that were endeavoring to maintain or transform the relations of production" (88). For those who reject these theses, or who did so years ago, when Marxist accounts of the English Revolution went out of favor, the book demonstrates that the history of popular collective praxis is a viable method, preferable to other explanatory models, specifically new historicism and revisionism. The book is not simply a throw-back to a pre-post structuralist Marxist humanism or an unreflecting Whig history however. Rather, because he takes seriously postmodernist critical practice, Holstun covers a lot of theoretical ground to justify his dialectical method. This is a book as much written to clear the forest as to preserve the endangered species hiding in the trees.

The book divides into two halves: Part One engages with critical questions; and Part Two takes up particular examples. The first chapter attacks recent accounts of the mid-century struggles by historians who stress personal relationships among elites, local traditional loyalties, and contingency, rather than looking at what intentions drove radicals to act. Holstun approaches the charge of *anachronism* that has been leveled against Whig or Marxisant historical interpretations. "Revisionist"—and here he targets Conrad Russell, John Morrill, J .C. D. Clark, Kevin Sharpe, Conal Condren, and Mark Kishlansky—"rigorously police contemporary historical writing for interloping modern phenomena, social models, and schemes of analysis" (21). As Holstun argues, "This prerogative rigor regarding terminology and concepts aims not to keep the empirical discussion of historical change from starting off on the wrong foot, but to throttle it in its crib" (21). The revisionists' purging of analytic terms along with historical models conceals a broad agenda: an effort "to purge intention and ideology from historical explanation" (12).

Holstun wants an account of the English Revolution that reclaims popular

actions in the face of a rising modernity that is both process and product of mid-seventeenth century struggles. For the revisionist J. C. D. Clark, for instance, "modernity is nothing more than electrification plus the parish." So quips Holstun, as he hits home a larger point that the revisionist case can do little to explain the vast changes from that early modern society to our own. Social change explanations, he argues, are vital to the ongoing work of explaining history, and to ignore them is to miss what is important about studying the past, at best, and to produce a history that is disingenous at worst. The second chapter turns its lights on new historicism in English literary studies, exploring the influence of Michel Foucault. Despite an interest in the marginal and the marginalized, Foucault is "constitutionally opposed to history from below" (51), emphasizing the top-down, oppressive power structures. The last chapter in this opening section offers an excellent bibliographic essay in Marxist thought that pursues a "way ahead" (127) for historians and literary critics. Holstun claims, paradoxically, that preserving a base/superstructure model is a good means to preserve a domain of free praxis; superstructure is the realm for creative revolutionary agency. Holstun's central aim, even if some of his local skirmishes seem familiar, is to revive interest in the humanist subject, collective action, and ethical norms.

In the second half of his book, Holstun offers several "projects in human emancipation" (xi) stretching from 1625 to 1660. Chapter Five presents the case of John Felton, assassin of the Duke of Buckingham, as a means to examine modes of resistance to absolutist power of the Stuart state. "Tyrannicidal practice," (151) Holstun argues, is evident in Felton's ideological motivations and in the various literary attacks on the Duke. This is a Sartrean, existential radicalism: "Felton methodically left the patronage system for the realm of freedom," (169) writes Holstun, meaning the freedom to die. It was difficult, but not impossible, to posit agency in an asymmetrical power structure. Holstun looks for these kinds of actors employing near-impossible agency to understand the meaning of ideological and material struggle.

Four ensuing chapters consider radical projects formed in the English Revolution, each a challenge to Cromwellian authority. Holstun provides an excellent, if at times microscopic presentation of the historical moments in which to set his close readings of texts and events. One case is that of the Army Agitators, a group of army spokesmen who challenged the grandees to widen the scope of freedoms demanded in their revolutionary programs for change. These men represent "a bottom-up model of martial praxis" (196), authorized by the threat of force and appeals to natural right. Their goal was to spread to society at large the Army's radical transformation from a hierarchical to an associative collective. Rather than a "possessive individualism," these radicals chose an ideal of fraternity, a collectivist guild ethos, as the starting point of their claims. This further radicalism Cromwell and the grandees could not

brook. Another such case is that of Anna Trapnel, a religious radical who prophesied against Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s. Trapnel, who fasted and who turned her bed chamber into a public meeting place, created a kind of political theater to rival Whitehall as a space for the discussion of politics. After Trapnel's arrest by Cromwell and the Council, she was imprisoned at Bridewell, where she preached from her cell to crowds that were so great that Trapnel herself, in a sick and weakened state, asked to have them limited. Holstun looks at her practice of radical prophecy within a context of a new kind of political public sphere, refusing to place it outside the political spectrum as merely religious or visionary, but rather defining it as a kind of rational political speech. Against those feminist scholars who would rather juxtapose a feminist rhetoric of the body or the senses to the rationalist discourses of politics and science, Holstun argues that Trapnel's choice to speak in public was indeed an attempt to bring into existence a new collective experience, a rational, democratic and genuinely popular mode of opposition to earthly power. Fifth monarchists, as small producer radicals, sought to democratize religion and fashion an oppositional collective. A third chapter presents the views of the republican Edward Sexby, whose conspiracy challenged Cromwell's dictatorship from the vantage point of an ideology of fraternal republicanism with religious aspects. The final chapter makes good on the book's early promise to consider the English Revolution as a node in the transformation from feudalism to capitalism. By looking carefully at the revolutionary program of the Diggers, and particularly at their charismatic and visionary leader, the plebeian autodidact Gerard Winstanley, Holstun shows how his hopes for non-capitalist collective life, and his clear writings proposing radical reworking of the conditions of production, were made real in a clutch of agrarian communist communities, smashed by Cromwell's police. This final chapter is a brilliant examination of an unjustifiably ignored social thinker. A passionate, sympathetic account of how hunger drives people to radical action, this chapter in a nuanced way explores how the capitalist drive for 'improvement' left out many people.

The book is long, lively, and filled with judicious quotation of little-examined materials. Still, the question arises: who are its readers? Does Holstun mean to wake up the lazy and indifferent? Convert the revisionist or new historicist? Rouse the faithful? Holstun has a bent for exaggeration arising from outrage, and in this he speaks to the faithful. A mischaracterization such as "Pocock has said that the 'historian of discourse' should pay no attention to the practical, extra-discursive results of political writing," (327) is followed up by a quotation from *Virtue, Commerce, History*, which is in actuality two quotations spliced together from text fifteen pages apart. Pocock's text reveals more nuance; the opening of Pocock's next paragraph reflects, "The historian therefore expects the relation between language and experience to be diachronous,

ambivalent, and problematic" (J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, History*, 29): surely this comment should mitigate Holstun's absolutist reading. Holstun's quotations are accurate, but the impression left is slightly misleading, particularly since he fails to set Pocock's 1985 words in their appropriate context in debates amongst political scientists about the validity of doing historical work at all. Holstun is not entirely wrong about Pocock, but he is not quite fair either; this kind of reducing-of-shades-of-meaning may lessen credibility for some readers. Holstun does not need this polemical overkill.

If readers can look past the occasional polemical extravagences, they will profit mightily from the ways that Holstun takes into view the material imperatives that gave past actors meaning, and highlights the dialectical relation between social forces and individual action. Inviting normative social theory, Holstun's framework is a good deal broader than that of other recent cultural studies in the field. For in many places, this is a brave, and much-needed, history for today: Holstun compares Sexby's rights-based struggle to today's debates between liberal and Marxist proponents of natural rights against conservative political theorists; the Diggers' agrarian resistance to capitalist accumulation is likened to the Amazonian Forest People's challenge to Brazilian capitalist encroachment. Holstun practices a rich, dialectical historical method in which the past and the present are in productive dialogue. This is a book that should engender much discussion, and when it does, it will have accomplished much.

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Feeding on Infinity: Readings in the Romantic Rhetoric of Internalization by Joshua Wilner. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp. x + 154, $34.95 cloth.

Feeding on Infinity, Joshua Wilner's challenging and rewarding new book, comprises several related essays on "the problem of internalization as it finds expression in European Romantic literary tradition." Wilner argues that the discourse of "internalization," so familiar in literary studies, psychoanalysis, ideological critique, and everyday use, has most often been applied inexactly to processes and concepts that "are not well grasped, if grasped at all." In close readings of largely canonical texts by Rousseau, Wordsworth, De Quincey, Baudelaire, and others, he sets out to perform a "labor of conceptual clarification" (1–2).

"Romantic tradition," Wilner notes, is both source and object of the discourse of internalization. The most influential schematic accounts of Romanticism from recent decades—including Harold Bloom's "internalization of quest romance," Paul de Man's characterization of "Romanticism as interiorization" and M. H. Abrams's argument that Romanticism reinterprets a Judeo-Christian scheme of creation, fall, and millennial redemption "as a drama of consciousness"—rely on some notion of internalization (5, 15). Such characterizations, he acknowledges, have "not wanted for critics"—but even the critics tend to view internalization as "a known quantity." Wilner, countering this tendency, maintains that "the notion itself remains obscure and thus that the *problem* of internalization and the *problem* of Romanticism may indeed, with respect to the discourse of literary history, be closely intertwined" (5).

These intertwined problems become the subject of the book's first main essay (chapter 2), which scrutinizes the ways in which literary histories of Romanticism such as Abrams's apply the discourse of internalization to Romantic tradition. Subsequent essays shift the focus to the discourse as it manifests itself in Romantic texts, looking closely at the dynamics of internalization in these texts on the dual supposition that to do so is "to return to a point at which that problem is first being taken hold of as such" and that contemporary discussions of internalization—in histories of Romanticism, but also in psychoanalytical theory and ideological critique—"tend to derive in more or less mediated fashion from the theoretical practice of writers of the Romantic period" (5).

Why did the discourse of internalization begin to develop at this particular moment? Acknowledging that "the current project is based on too narrow a sampling of material to claim other than speculative value," Wilner proceeds to offer some bold speculations:

> that the development and transformation of the discursive practices in question are bound up with the history of patriarchy in the West, with the ambiguous role that male Romantic writers played in the reproduction of patriarchal cultural authority, and with the breakdown, clearly heralded by Wordsworth's "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," of the foundational generic distinction between the language of poetry and the language of prose, an organizing principle that had become closely intertwined with gender hierarchies. (6)

One's assessment of *Feeding on Infinity* must depend in part on how one rates "speculative value"—or, more precisely, on the degree to which one appreciates close reading of a "narrow" selection of passages as valuable in itself, if only merely suggestive of a larger cultural history.

The readings that make up the substance of the book are stimulating, nuanced, and often brilliant. The relationship of literary-historical speculation to

close reading here is reminiscent of de Man and Geoffrey Hartman: the speculations do not rely on numerous examples, marshaled as if to compel assent; rather, they remain surmises, suggested by the passages and underwritten by a rich and learned sense of literary history that is evoked by allusion rather than mapped out in any systematic way. Wilner's surmises seem wild at times—an impression that is heightened by his rather surprisingly unselfconscious recourse at times to a rhetoric of cultural critique that is, arguably, more reductive than de Man's and Hartman's language and that contrasts with the subtlety of his own readings. Nevertheless, the conjectures are intriguing and plausible, and they place familiar texts in new perspectives while suggesting avenues for future investigation.

In describing "the *psychoanalytic* problem of internalization" and its "troublesome interface" with literary studies (2), Wilner notes in his introduction that psychoanalysis, which customarily distinguishes between "primary" and "secondary" internalization, has tended to focus on the latter because, in the words of W. W. Meissner, "the primary forms of internalization and externalization occur in the earliest stages of psychic development and their basic nature remains obscure." Far from acceding to the implication that "obscurity" constitutes a reason to pass over an area of inquiry, Wilner stresses the importance of analyzing the "processes that lie on the far side of language, but perhaps *just* on the far side and eventuating in its acquisition and consolidation." Insisting that these processes ought to be understood "not only genetically, as the shadowy trace of early psychological processes, but also structurally," he replaces the distinction between primary and secondary internalization with a different bifurcated model, in which "inhibition and involution of energies arising from within and tending toward outward discharge" are distinguished from "the literal, metaphorical, or phantasmatic transfer of some entity and its associated functions from an 'outside' to an 'inside'"; this distinction is, in turn, complicated by the possibility that these different movements may coexist and compound each other and by the inadequacy of the inner/outer dichotomy as a descriptor of quasi-linguistic phenomena (3–4).

As Wilner acknowledges in a note to this densely compacted, difficult phase of his argument, the emphasis on a linguistic element that resists spatialization owes much to de Man, and indeed the book "may within limits be understood as an attempt to graft a de Manian conception of rhetoric onto a pshchoanalytic conception of internalization and vice versa, and thus as only one of many current efforts to bring psychoanalysis and deconstruction into closer relation with one another" (127n5). To trace the bifurcations and involutions of such complex theoretical analysis requires considerable labor, and readers—especially those to whom "the intensity of critical debate . . . surrounding the advent of 'theory'" feels not quite so "recent" as it apparently

does to Wilner (13)—might benefit from a more disciplined use of abstractions in these introductory pages. But the complexities belong to the topic itself, not just to Wilner's language; and the labor of mapping out these complexities is, in fact, essential to the "conceptual clarification" he undertakes.

Moreover, he has a knack for pacing. Just when the complexity of his theoretical model seems about to overwhelm its potential usefulness, he turns to a literary text, using it at once to clarify the concepts in question and to illustrate their explanatory power. It is in such close readings that the true value of Wilner's book is to be found. He makes even highly canonical texts seem newly astonishing. The preamble to Rousseau's *Confessions* becomes his first "proof text," representing an "inaugural moment" in the cultural history of internalization because, whereas Montaigne wrote of revealing the body in its nakedness, Rousseau "writes of unveiling . . . its interior" (6–7). Next, the Wordsworthian image of a mind that "feeds upon infinity" is offered as a "signal instance" of a physical figure that represents the "schematic transformations" of internalization (10); Wilner hypothesizes that "such formulations and the reflections they condense involve deeply embedded if obscure registrations of early and ongoing transactions between an imperfectly constituted self and its objects" and that "these dealings inform the critical and creative power of poetic language generally" (1).

Wilner's cogent discussion of these texts in the introduction establishes his approach for the remaining chapters. The book's early pages consider passages from Dante and Keats, among others, and chapter 4 includes substantial further discussion of Rousseau's *Confessions*; but Wordsworth garners most of the attention in the first half of the book, in fascinating and original readings of "My heart leaps up," the boat-stealing and woodcock-snaring episodes of *The Prelude*, "Nutting," and the Boy of Winander. These chapters further explore the "interface" between psychoanalysis and literary studies: chapter 3 convincingly demonstrates the affinity of Wordsworth's narrative of "the growth of the poet's mind" to Nietzsche's, Freud's, and Melanie Klein's accounts of "the role internalization plays in developing the sense of guilt" (27), while chapter 4 examines patterns of incorporation in Rousseau and Wordsworth in terms of Freud's notion of identification. Chapter 5, a scant six pages long, offers a revelatory reading of the intersection of "action, internalization, and utterance" with gender, sexuality, and poetic identity in Wordsworth's "Nutting"; here, as elsewhere, Wilner touches "with gentle hand" (qtd. 64).

Chapter 6 looks at a "sequence of nineteenth-century texts by three male writers whose work worries the distinction between poetry and prose" (67): Baudelaire's *Les paradis artificiels* incorporates the memorable passage from De Quincey's *Confessions* that, in turn, incorporates the Solitary's sublime vision

from book 2 of Wordsworth's *Excursion*. This sequence, Wilner proposes, suggests "the ways later writing begins to desublimate the patterns of internalization at work in 'high' Romantic literature, and especially poetry, and in the process disturb the related hierarchies of gender and genre with which the sublimation of those patterns was allied" (12). The reader pauses on "*was* allied" (as in "*had become* closely intertwined" in the blocked quotation above): for the author has done little to establish this "alliance" before turning his attention to its disruption. This makes his point somewhat unexpected, but the abruptness of its introduction should perhaps be considered less a shortcoming than a praiseworthy instance of cutting to the chase in a book whose literary-historical claims are frankly speculative. Certainly the link between hierarchies of gender and genre has been made often enough that it requires no further rehearsing.

Tracing a history of desublimation through a "sequence" of textual incorporations creates an effective transition to the remainder of the book, which is largely given over to further discussion of Baudelaire and his increasingly physical, increasingly violent metaphors of ingestion. Concluding chapter 6, a reading of Baudelaire's prose poem "La Soupe et les nuages" emphasizes the link between subversion of the hierarchies of gender and genre and "a metaphoric of oral incorporation" (67). Chapter 7, "Drinking Rules," juxtaposes Baudelaire's "Enivrez-vous!" with stanzas from canto 2 of Byron's *Don Juan*—"Man, being reasonable, must get drunk . . . ," arguing that the French poet's language "moves toward a more enigmatic, nonintersubjective exchange with things, at once hallucinatory and utterly prosaic" (79, 91). Chapter 8 extends the discussion of incorporation and figuration to Baudelaire's "*Poème du hachisch.*"

Baudelaire's figures of incorporation, Wilner contends, are typically "metaphors of metaphor, dense sites of linguistic involution" (102). Where the poet uses the language of drugs most literally, "that language continues to inscribe a network of rhetorical transformations, but in the mode of resistance" (hashish as a "vomitif," resisting incorporation). Baudelaire is a central figure for Wilner because the "itinerary" of the poet's work "compresses the history" that Wilner outlines in his own book, "a history that moves through the sublimations of self-reflection toward the literalizing and imaginatively violent dynamics of incorporation they idealize" (107).

Wilner's tracing of this history culminates in a provocative "Tailpiece" that juxtaposes passages on childhood spanking from Rousseau's *Confessions* and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "A Poem Is Being Written." The "admittedly schematic" analysis in this "post(int)erior" chapter calls attention to the potential importance of anal eroticism as an area of future exploration relating to the study of orality in the current work. If the general cultural significance of this

"seemingly narrow area of investigation" remains to be demonstrated by others—or by Wilner himself in future writings—both this suggestive "Tailpiece" and *Feeding on Infinity* as a whole succeed in demonstrating beyond dispute "that the discursive economy of Romanticism has yet to exhaust its resources and power to disturb our settled habits of thought" (117).

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Romantic Returns: Superstition, Imagination, History, by Deborah Elise White. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, Pp. 227. $45.00 cloth.

Each of the three writers covered in *Romantic Returns* may be associated with one of the topoi—"Superstition, Imagination, History"—listed in the book's subtitle. Superstition is treated at length only in the chapter on William Collins's poetry; William Hazlitt's treatment of imagination and ethics is the focus of a second chapter, and—while Shelleyan imagination is certainly central to this book—the final chapter is entitled "Shelley and the Proof of History." That said, Deborah Elise White's introduction makes clear that her primary interest throughout is not so much in a developing historical narrative as in Romantic imagination and its variously constructed relationship to historical individuality—to the way the Romantic "I" is constituted—and her primary argument is that "Romantic texts often offer a more, not less, sophisticated account of 'ideology' and 'illusion' than that offered by contemporary criticism [of Romanticism]" (2–3). She notes further that her "aim is not . . . to defend aesthetic values that somehow 'transcend historical divisions,' but rather to reinvestigate and reinvigorate ways in which the category of the aesthetic—for which the Romantic term is imagination—enables a critical and reflexive articulation of the historical passage between knowledge and action, epistemology and ethics, fine art and politics . . . [and that a] meaningful—as opposed to a cynical—politics may not be possible without aestheticization. In brief, to arrive at anything like the problem of history and context . . . one needs to confront and not merely to 'critique' the position of imagination" (3–4).

Although the introduction claims not to be constructing, or re-constructing, a literary or cultural history, the chapter on Collins starts from Geoffrey Hartman's suggestion that Romantic defenses of imagination may stem from eighteenth-century attempts to distinguish imagination from superstition. The ensuing readings of how, in Collins's progress poems, poetry "can only narrate the progress of civilization . . . at the cost of narrating . . . its own decline" (35),

like the comments on the peculiarities of Collins's language as "its setting-to-work in the *act* of poetry" (31), are not in themselves ground-breaking. Nor is it unusual to note that in the various tensions—"between poetry and progress, superstition and enlightenment, or even between Scotland and England—one cannot always tell on which side of the border Collins's loyalties lie" (36), although White does offer nicely nuanced readings of Collins's poetry and especially of the often overlooked "Highlands Ode."

More interestingly, White rehearses the political climate of both 1749–1750 when the "Highlands Ode" was written and of the 1780s when the manuscript of the poem was found, to consider "the sheer inextricability of the political and the literary allegory," rightly noting that criticism of Collins "has not usually had much to say about the relays between his literary topoi and his patriotic ones" (38). She returns also, to Collins's uses of Milton, Thompson, and Tasso (as well as, perhaps less convincingly, of Spenser) noting that "geography allegorizes history, but history, too, when treated as a sequential narrative of progress . . . increasingly reveals an allegorical dimension" (43). In effect, White argues, Collins's often-remarked-upon performative self-consciousness shows us the process by which the Enlightenment produced what it claimed to discover and interrogate, namely the conflict between the historical and the poetic. Finally, if the resulting view of Collins's poetry will not surprise those who specialize in his work, the close readings are deft and subtle, the case reformulated for the "mutual determination of the geopolitical and the literary-history subjects [in both senses of the word] of Collins's poetry" (50). Moreover, White takes her examination of literary history and history in Collins a step further than previous critics have, noting the way the poems' shifting registers destabilize the very categories of imagination and power which they engage.

The reading of Collins launches the next chapter, on Romantic imagination in Hazlitt, especially in Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action: Being an Argument in Defense of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind.* Against contemporary critiques of Romantic aesthetics, White questions whether "the *dis* of disinterest necessarily refer[s] to powers of transcendence" and suggests rather that Romantic discourses of imagination offer "a radical rearticulation of interest and disinterest alike," and of the concepts of "history, agency, critique" (65). Again, White's argument rests on elegant close reading. In particular, she looks at Hazlitt's claim that "the interest one takes in one's own welfare is, precisely, imaginary" (67). Hazlitt, White's argument continues, does not equate the imaginary with the unreal; within the temporal realm, and given human agents' orientation "to and by futurity," all norms and all generalizations, thus all action, require imagination, or, to quote the "fulcrum" of Hazlitt's argument in the *Essay:* "The imagination . . . must carry me out of myself into the feelings of others by one and the same process by which I am

thrown forward as it were into my future being" (73). Hazlitt's construction of "imagination," on this account, means that abstract critiques of Romantic imagination miss the point, although—as with imagination and history in Collins—"interest" (and specifically the identity [*esse*] of both self and other) in Hazlitt is itself destabilized.

White's argument moves carefully between textually-based close reading and philosophical speculations that echo Heideggerian, deconstructive, and poststructuralist philosophy. The argument is dense, although it is punctuated with rhetorically seductive moments like the following, which appears midway through the chapter on Hazlitt: "I have no desire to hide my hand in this matter, and a brief digression situating this reading in a wider context of argument may clarify what is at stake . . . for the ethical and historical questions that arise in the course of such interpretations" (79). The promised digression deploys James, Rorty, Levinas, Derrida and de Man on the epistemological and ethical issues raised first by the close readings of Hazlitt. As White concedes, she may "draw out the implications of Hazlitt's argument a little further than he himself does, but" she adds "only a very little further" (82). Finally, imagination itself is posed by White's Hazlitt as an imposition or delusion, positing a self, not to mention making the problem of historical interpretation look, as White says, rather different, and rather like romance, in what is ultimately Hazlitt's "Romantic critique of ideology" (89–90)—and of critiques of Romantic ideology. The chapter concludes: "One cannot historicize one's way out of this impasse, because history, including the history of historicism, is its repeated occasion. One can only (re)articulate and project it anew" (90). Hazlitt's own impasse is then rehearsed in his use of imagination to legitimize national politics (even in the *Essay*), which in context, White argues, exposes not so much the fundamental difficulties of Romantic imagination but the fundamental difficulties Romantic accounts of imagination confront, if uneasily.

The final two chapters of *Romantic Returns* both turn to Shelley. Again, texts are read closely. That Shelley, like Hazlitt, has things to say about futurity and that Shelley addresses the problem of reference is (as White acknowledges) not exactly new territory; moreover, the "borders" between ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology are often crossed in recent critical readings of Shelley (many of which are cited, although oddly Stuart Peterfreund's related work, available in print well before the recent publication of his *Shelley among Others,* is not). The first of White's Shelley chapters marks a return to these questions, being divided into sections on epistemology, primarily on "Mont Blanc"; on ethics, where White raises the (rhetorical) question of whether in Shelley's pamphlets written on behalf of reform "the ethical formations stand free from complications" (114); and on aesthetics, where White revisits Shelley's *Defence of Poetry,* reiterating that there "poetry . . . turns out to be as much

the expression of an aporia as the articulation of a link" (122). Where aesthetics in Hazlitt unavoidably stages moral questions, so what first appears to be Shelley's organic aesthetics re-stages epistemological and ethical problems. Looking again at "power" and "will" in Shelley's *Defence,* White notes that poetry's "legislation is . . . no more subject to epistemological or ethical closure" than the laws Shelley's pamphlets sought to reform (or the re-formations he sought) (124) and—one of her nicer insights—concludes that poets are unacknowledged legislators because knowledge and legislation, like power and will, are incompatible. The chapter finally comments on its own categories—ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology—as not simply different interpretive registers but as all referring to "something" while at the same time self-constitutive (127). Poetry, thus, promises or "prefigures something" (128), but only for the always inscrutable future in which White's (and our) readings participate.

Romantic Returns closes with a reading of "The Revolt of Islam" and with questions about didactic poetry and Shelleyan symbol and allegory. The consideration of Shelley's well-documented skepticism about causality in the context of didacticism is useful, as is White's argument that Shelley's aesthetic is neither "a self-negating mode calling for action to supplement it [n]or a self-sustaining one that supplements action with a utopian ideal" (147). White concludes that Shelley takes his texts to "the brink of a language that can only be interpreted as the emptying out of interpretive possibility"; more surprisingly, she adds that, nonetheless, "something" is always meant: "in spite of itself, the text refers; it teaches, it narrates, it describes, it names" (161). The book's final sentences read: "It [didactic encounter] refers but not to anything or not to anything that could be isolated as a thing. It is the promise of dawn and the artifice of poiesis—a bright and mourning star" (163). Here, with this already deconstructed figure and already performed (indeed, re-constituted) tension, the book ends somewhat abruptly, even as its recuperation of reading and its readings of Romanticism bring their own pleasures, which White tacitly attributes to her own didactic encounter with Collins, Hazlitt, and, above all, Shelley.

Each chapter of *Romantic Returns,* in fact, ends with a gesture toward the process of reading as "an *act* of poiesis" (58, 99, 163). These knowledgeable, theoretically-informed readings bespeak White's reflextivity. On her own account, knowledge and power may be incompatible. A "methodological postscript" (18) to the introductory chapter, drawing on de Man's work on the materiality of the letter and Benjamin's concept of "rescue," concedes this to be a risk, adding that "the responsibility of reading is to run risks" (24). If this is granted, then *Romantic Returns* may count itself as a thoroughly responsible act of reading.

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Irish Classics by Declan Kiberd. Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 2001. Pp. xvi + 704. $35.00 cloth.

Critics and journalists frequently employ the term "public intellectual" when describing Declan Kiberd, a Professor of Anglo-Irish Literature at University College Dublin. Kiberd can lay claim to the title of *public* intellectual because of his accessible prose and his cogent commentary on trends in Irish culture. Kiberd's last book, *Inventing Ireland* (Harvard University Press, 1995), a study of twentieth-century Irish writing, has been the single most influential text in the growing discourse of Irish postcolonial studies. Many critics worked to situate Ireland in a postcolonial context before Kiberd, and some, like David Lloyd, did so with more theoretical sophistication. But Kiberd's use of the work of Fanon and Said, especially, to frame a narrative about Irish writers' response to British colonialism made a postcolonial approach to Ireland seem inevitable, and quickly paradigmatic. Kiberd's critics, like Denis Donoghue, criticize him for the very thing that gives him the title of public intellectual—i.e., the fact that his arguments are convincing to a large number of readers, both in and out of the academy. Donoghue and others argue that Kiberd simplifies Irish colonial experience, and in doing so becomes politically correct.

Irish Classics covers a broader time period than its predecessor, and does not seek to construct an overarching theoretical argument about Irish literature (although the books occasionally overlap—the readings of Samuel Beckett and Patrick Kavanagh, are virtual reprints of those in *Inventing Ireland*). *Irish Classics* is a more personal, idiosyncratic work, a chance for Kiberd to write about some of his own favorites. His close readings reveal his facility with these texts; their clarity and complexity suggest that they are derived from a series of classroom notes or lectures. These are the kinds of supple interpretations that can only come out of multiple, enthusiastic readings. Kiberd's engaging style hints that he is a first-rate teacher, a rare commodity in important scholarly books.

The title of the book seems to imply a canon of classic texts, but Kiberd does not set out to define a fixed set of greatest Irish works or aesthetic standards. Instead he defines a classic as a book that registers complex and fluid responses from its readers. He writes, "[A classic] is in fact the sort of book that everybody enjoys reading and nobody wants to come to an end. It owes its reputation, undoubtedly, to its initial impact on its own generation, without which few books ever survive: but after that it displays a capacity to remain forever young and fresh, offering challenges to every succeeding generation which must learn anew how to be its contemporary. It reads each passing age

at least as intensely as it is read by it" (xiv–x). He groups Irish classics into three categories: "a work of art in which human energies are shaped to produce words and images of awesome beauty and internal rigour"; "a narrative which generates a myth so powerful as to obscure the individual writer and to unleash an almost superhuman force"; and "a text that has had, by virtue of its eloquence and insight, a palpable influence upon the course of human action or the prosecution of public policy" (xi).

Such a broad definition of a classic allows Kiberd to range widely amidst texts that do not share thematic or stylistic characteristics. In thirty-five chapters, Kiberd covers everything from the Gaelic bards of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Swift's *Drapier's Letters* and *Gulliver's Travels,* the journals of Protestant nationalist Wolfe Tone, George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin, Dracula* (which he brilliantly reclaims as a thoroughly Irish text), Flann O'Brien's *At Swim Two Birds,* the autobiographies of the Blasket Islanders (the islands off the west coast of Ireland which have been uninhabited since the 1950s but were an inspirational source of folk culture and the Irish language for many writers, including J. M. Synge) and the Northern Ireland peace treaty of 1998.

Throughout these disparate texts, however, Kiberd weaves several compelling threads. Most important, *Irish Classics* defines Irish writing as bilingual. Kiberd does not bemoan the loss of Irish. As an Irish speaker himself, he makes a compelling—although largely implicit—case that Irish writing should be understood as coming out of a bilingual culture. Beginning with the sixteenth century, he makes the case that Irish writers are "radical traditionalists" (43) because they resist any kind of sanctioned or imposed tradition. That resistance becomes the tradition of Irish writing, one that for Kiberd is thoroughly modern: "for by very definition modernism, in order to maintain itself, must never lapse into an official style" (631). What links all of these writers, he argues, is that "each has had to cope, in his or her way, with the coercive onset of modernity. Each has generated a narrative that seeks to salvage something of value from the past, even as the forces of the new world are embraced" (628).

The most inventive chapter of *Irish Classics* is Kiberd's reading of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, which he sees as the most recent Irish manifestation of modernity. He points out that much of the text attempts to cope with the past, going so far as to assert that "the seeds of the Belfast agreement were sown in the works of Irish literature" (631). He describes it as "richly indebted not just to postcolonial theory and to recent forms of Irish criticism, but even more potently to the preface of Charlotte Brooke and the postscript of Maria Edgeworth" (628).

He does a fascinating close reading of the agreement, placing it in the context of the literary tradition he traces throughout the book. He connects the

agreement's declaration that people in Northern Ireland can identify themselves as Irish or British or both to Oscar Wilde's fluid sense of national and sexual identity. He writes, "Much of the language of the Belfast Agreement is vague, even 'poetic.' That is because it offers a version of multiple identities, of a kind for which no legal language yet exists" (630). He describes the agreement's remarkable rejection of the Republic's claim to Northern Ireland as in concert with Irish rejection of traditionalism, especially in the move towards the English language during the nineteenth century: "The profound lack of sentimentality behind all these gestures suggests that, far from being worshippers of the past, what Irish people really worship is their own power over it, including the power to bury it at a time of their own choosing" (631).

Irish Classics occasionally challenges dominant readings of Irish texts, and therefore it will be of most interest to scholars of Irish studies. Occasionally, however, as in the reading of the Belfast Agreement, Kiberd reaches out and suggests new ways to read political and cultural trends, cementing his status as Ireland's reigning public intellectual.

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Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood by Joseph Valente. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002. Pp. 192. $29.95 cloth.

Upon seeing the title, I was prepared not to like this book very much, a feeling based largely on my personal opinion that Hibernian readings overlook much of what I find intriguing in Stoker's writings, including his complex attitudes toward gender issues, his ambivalent treatment of science and technology, and the apparent disparity between his liberal political beliefs and his occasionally racist sentiments. Reading Valente's intelligent—indeed groundbreaking work—convinced me, however, that an Irish reading can answer many of the perplexing questions raised in *Dracula* and in Stoker's other works.

It should come as no surprise that Valente's study focuses on *Dracula* (and much of my review will therefore zero in on his reading of that novel). However, *Dracula's Crypt* is also worth reading because it introduces readers to several lesser known works, including *The Primrose Path* (recently reissued by The Desert Island Dracula Library) and "The Dualitists" as well as *The Snake's Pass,* the only Stoker work to take place in Ireland and therefore the work on which many Hibernian readings rely.

Valente lays out the thesis of *Dracula's Crypt* clearly in his introduction,

articulating at the same time the degree to which his "revisionist Hibernian reading" differs from previous readings because the "specifically Irish elements in the novel . . . serve to modulate Dracula's central metaphorics of blood into a . . . critique of this racialist logic and its attendant illogic, racialist paranoia" (5). Thus, Valente argues that Stoker does not share the often simplistic views of the characters he has created but rather looks at these characters with some degree of ironic detachment. The result of this reading is to distance *Dracula* from the popular fiction with which it is generally compared and to see Stoker's criticism of the individuals who would share such a simplistic worldview. As a result, *Dracula* becomes more rich and complex, Stoker himself a more interesting writer, a deliberate craftsman rather than "an allegory, a type of his age and his society" (7).

To support his Hibernian reading, Valente amasses an impressive array of evidence that includes the analysis of the ethnic orientation of Stoker's immediate family; a thorough grounding in the history and politics of Britain and Eastern Europe; the knowledge of both literary genres and cultural studies; and an understanding of psychoanalytic approaches to literature. Finally, while previous literary critics have sometimes called attention to Stoker's predilection for puns, Valente is perhaps the first critic to undertake a systematic reading of those puns and to use the puns to demonstrate Stoker's awareness of social and political issues.

Valente's organization of evidence is both skillful and sensible. After laying out his argument in the brief introduction, he begins the first chapter by looking at Stoker's own background as a hybrid (Anglo and Celtic). Demonstrating Stoker's position as both insider and outsider provides the framework for arguing that Stoker's attitude toward the fin de siècle status quo is more crucial than is generally thought.

The very short second chapter examines a little known Stoker short story, "The Dualitists," as a prelude to *Dracula* both in terms of its deliberate and obvious sexual symbolism and its use of the language of "state administration and policy" (45). As Valente explains, the phallic symbolism of the story illustrates "the sexual ingredient of racial and national tensions," a central element in . . . the Irish Dracula while the language of politics makes legible "topical analogies to the Irish situation" (45).

The transition to Chapter 3, which focuses on the Irish Dracula, is therefore an easy one, and Valente opens the chapter with the direct statement: "Ireland and the Irish Question may be said to constitute the 'other scene' of *Dracula,* a never fully present correlative to the official narrative concerning the Balkans and the Eastern Question, at once a supplementary shadow term and the novel's ultimate object of reference" (51). Citing various kinds of internal evidence, Valente demonstrates that Ireland was never far from Stoker's mind as he worked on *Dracula.* For example, Valente notes that the child thievery

in the novel likely comes from various Irish legends, especially legends compiled by Stoker's friend Lady Jane Wilde in *Ancient Legends in Ireland,* and published "just two years before Stoker began work" (53) on *Dracula.* He then goes on to demonstrate that Dracula "seems to have been built trait by stereotypical trait as a parody of stock perceptions of the Catholic Irish in England" (60). This chapter also provides a helpful introduction to Anglo-Irish relations in the nineteenth century and concludes by arguing that Dracula is threatening, not because he is "Other," but because he is identical: "Stoker's Irish vampire is always just under the skin of his prey, at once an intimate, eroticized part of them—a corporeal manifestation of their own wishes and attitudes—and yet radically dissociated from them" (81).

Chapter 4 continues to examine the link between supposed vampires and supposed victims, demonstrating "a deathless antagonism that is also a secret sharing" (84). Indeed, this chapter provides a provocative reading of a scene that many critics have addressed, not all of them successfully: the scene in which Jonathan Harker cuts himself shaving and fails to see Dracula in the mirror. Valente's reading reinforces the Irishness of that scene as well as the limitations of Dracula's opponents. It also discusses Stoker's use of punning language.

> Now Harker's . . . formula harbors a . . . half-buried pun, which represents one of Stoker's most characteristic and most frequently overlooked devices for extending and complicating the allegorical framework. The phrase *in it* bears a denotative English reference—"in the glass"—that invokes the legend that a vampire manifests no reflection, having no soul. But the phrase also carries a colloquial Hibernian sense—"presence," "there," "in existence"—that suggests Dracula possesses no being at all "except" as an emanation of the "self" who beholds him, a state perfectly consistent with his elusive resistance to any form of objectified reproduction. (86)

The mirror scene reveals Harker's blindness, and Valente is equally careful to point out how deluded the various characters are before making the transition to the clear-eyed Mina Harker.

The final chapter, which in my mind is the most interesting and revolutionary, focuses on Mina as the single character able to transform the antagonism that is present in both *Dracula* and in the world with which Stoker was familiar. Indeed, Valente manages to address many of the gender issues that have been noted by both feminist readers and Queer theorists as well as the previous Irish readings of the novel. Valente argues that Mina invokes a long line of "female personae of Ireland and personae of a feminized Ireland," coming ultimately to represent the Virgin Mary. She is thus the one character in *Dracula* able to nurture and forgive all the other characters, including Dracula:

"As the Blessed Virgin Mary became the dominant personification of the national ideal . . . female icons came to be consolidated under the figure of Mother Ireland . . . a perfect allegorical 'fit' for Mina's role" (130). And Chapter 5 concludes that Mina's transformative power to connect disparate perspectives is precisely what Stoker had hoped would happen politically through both Irish Home Rule and a sensible solution to the "Eastern Question." Valente concludes *Dracula's Crypt* by celebrating Mina and suggests that the young men of Stoker's time might have followed her lead to resolve "the Irish Question on the principles of domestic cosmopolitanism . . . instead of resolving the Irish Question . . . on principles of tribal bloodletting worthy of the vampire at his worst" (142–43).

An insightful and thought-provoking study of Bram Stoker, *Dracula's Crypt* is essential reading for anyone interested in Bram Stoker, *Dracula,* Irish studies, or fin de siècle literature and culture. It is not quite perfect, however. Even though none of the errors I encountered undermines the validity of Valente's Hibernian interpretation, the existence of several glaring errors did occasionally cause me to question whether there were more substantial ones that I did not catch. For example, when Valente is describing the influence of Stoker's parents, he observes that they "combined to transmit a sense of their subtle ethnic difference to their youngest son" (16). This information is simply wrong. While all of Stoker's biographers agree that Stoker's family was influential, they also agree that Bram was *not* the youngest son in the Stoker family, being followed by brothers Tom, Richard, and George as well as a sister Margaret.

Another error, this time one that comes closer to interfering with Valente's interpretation of Stoker, is his description of Norah Joyce (the heroine of *The Snake's Pass*) as "a native, exoticized Irish girl . . . her stationary life-posture standing for her relatively unitary and organic, because premodern, ethno-national identity" (13). While Norah and her father may indeed represent the Irish peasantry and thus be considered "organic" and "premodern," Phelim Joyce has arranged for his son Eugene to study engineering. By the end of the novel, the younger Joyce is already making "a name for himself as an engineer" (246), and even the senior Joyce is making investments in transportation. These details suggest that Stoker saw the Joyce family—and Ireland as a whole—as far more progressive—perhaps masculine—than Valente's reading suggests. Stoker did not often write of Ireland except in veiled terms, but the Ireland that he does depict is not necessarily backward or feminine. Even though *The Snake's Pass* was written in 1891, it anticipates two essays that Stoker wrote in 1907 for a special Irish edition of *The World's Work.* In "The Great White Fair," Stoker takes pride in the ability of the Irish to overcome the limitations of the past by acquiring expertise in technology while "The World's

Greatest Shipbuilding Yard" demonstrates the technological and business skills that had already led the Irish to dominate that field.

These relatively minor errors do not detract from the strength of Valente's study of the Irish elements in *Dracula* and Stoker's other fiction, however. Certainly *Dracula's Crypt* provides a provocative reading of a familiar text, one that I thoroughly recommend.

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Blake and Homosexuality by Christopher Z. Hobson. New York: Palgrave, 2000. Pp. xxii + 249. $49.95 cloth.

In *Blake and Homosexuality* Christopher Z. Hobson sets out to champion Blake's verbal and visual references to homosexuality as "a compact, flexible way to refer to the brutality and hypocrisy of conventional morality, defiance of its strictures, and the possibility of alternative, mutualistic forms of love" (3). Positioning his project as a response to W. J. T. Mitchell's 1982 call for Blakeans to contemplate "'the dangerous Blake,'" the Blake who presents "'images of rape, lust, sado-masochism, and other scenes of abnormal sexuality,'" including "scenes of homosexual fellatio in *Milton*" (xii; see "Inside the Blake Industry: Past, Present, and Future," *Studies in Romanticism* 21:3 [1982]: 410–16), Hobson makes two large claims: first, that Blake's "hatred of state cruelty, moral hypocrisy, and possessive male sexuality increasingly leads him to sympathize with and defend both female and male homosexuality" (3); and second, that feminist critics who see Blake as ultimately "antifeminine" or "enduringly masculinist" are "unaware of the importance of homosexuality and its persecution in Blake's culture" and thus "believe he firmly subordinated women to men" (xiii). Large claims, to be sure, that require far more evidence and sustained discussion than Hobson provides in his bold study, which focuses primarily on carefully selected plates from *The Four Zoas, Milton,* and *Jerusalem.* But *Blake and Homosexuality* is not so much a comprehensive overview of Blake's representation of homosexuality (or gender) as it is a determined effort to locate a Blake accepting of homosexuality, which Hobson manages with élan through a series of prophetic, energetic, often ingenious and historically dense readings. In seven evenly-paced chapters Hobson maps contemporary cultural positions on homosexuality (chapter 1), traces the emergence of Blake's accepting view of homosexuality in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Book of Urizen,* and *The Four Zoas* (chapters 2 and 3), considers how Blake's view of homosexuality intersects with his assessment of Milton

(chapters 4 and 5), and argues that Blake's view of homosexuality is crucial to comprehending the liberatory *Jerusalem* (chapter 6) as well as current critical perspectives on Romanticism and sexuality (conclusion).

Unfortunately Hobson begins the first chapter of his study with an overly subtle example of Blake's representation of homosexuality, in that neither the text nor the design clearly depict the homosexual moment Hobson invokes but does not discuss until chapter three (and then with insight): page 78 of *The Four Zoas,* whose text voices Orc's rejection of Urizen's offer to relieve his sufferings, and whose design pictures a supine figure usually identified as Orc. Hobson points to the "heavily erased and penciled over" area above Orc's genitals to observe there "a kneeling figure with head above Orc's groin" (1), following the lead of Martin Butlin (*The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake,* 2 vols. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981]). However neither Butlin nor Cettina Magno and David Erdman "see traces of what may be erect penises both between the kneeling figure's legs and above Orc's belly (the latter almost fully effaced)" (1), effaced traces that are very difficult to see in the figure Hobson reproduces (2) or Magno and Erdman (*The Four Zoas* [Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1987]). Without further ado Hobson concludes "Most probably, then, the image shows two men in position for an act of fellation" (1). Readers who want more evidence or analysis of the claims made in this opening paragraph will have to wait another fifty pages. The rest of chapter one turns instead to an excellent social history of "homosexuality in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century London culture, including the repression of homosexuals and their vilification in sexual polemic; the considerable contribution to antihomosexual ideology made by the republican tradition in letters, Blake's own tradition; and the alternatives possible within the thought of the time" (3). Crucial to Hobson's mode of argumentation is the paucity of alternatives to the intensely antihomosexual rhetoric of the day, alternatives that require a good deal of decoding to decipher.

In chapter two, "Blake and the Poetics of Masculinity," the decoding process begins, as Hobson detects a few compelling moments in Blake's earlier works (before *The Four Zoas*) that are not entirely unsympathetic to homosexuality, or ensconced in a "poetics of masculinity" that views masculine heterosexual desire as superior to other forms of sexuality, that idealizes male aggressiveness, and that only celebrates female desire insofar as it provides delight to males. Thus, for instance, he points to the title page of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* where two central embracing figures of indeterminate sexuality might be lesbian, notes another potentially lesbian moment on plate 2 where a female figure hands grapes to another female figure (27), and sees these images underscoring the absence of active females and counterpointing the celebration of aggressive masculinity in the text. For *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* he contrasts Oothoon's being ushered into sexuality by Leutha

with Oothoon's offer to catch girls for Theotormon and "view their wanton play / In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon" (*Visions* 7:25–26); he reads the lesbian scene with Leutha as conventional in that the initiation prepares Oothoon for heterosexual activity, but takes the unexpected position that the voyeurism speech should be seen as positive because it is the first time Blake acknowledges perversity as a mature sexual response. Hobson sensitively argues that the raped Oothoon might not want sexual contact, that she might prefer to watch, but then makes the extraordinary statement that "everyone has fantasies going beyond recognized sexuality, involving homosexuality, onanism, dominance and subordination, sadism, masochism, voyeurism, raping and being raped, and much else" (35), and, as evidence, cites Rousseau's desire for a dominatrix and the masturbation fantasy that concludes Christopher Isherwood's 1964 play *A Single Man*. It is a brave but astonishingly under-theorized and under-examined position for Hobson to take, much at odds with the careful historicizing of chapter one.

In chapter three, "Homosexuality, Resistance, and Apocalypse: *The Four Zoas,*" Hobson pushes forward with his primary contention: that from *The Four Zoas* on, Blake makes discrete references to homosexuality that are positive and part of his larger visionary campaign against state cruelty, moral hypocrisy, and aggressive male sexuality. Hobson sees the text and designs of *The Four Zoas* containing a critique of "predatory masculinity" (49), especially the designs other critics see depicting a "degraded sexuality" in images of "masturbation, fellation, winged penises, giant phalluses, many-breasted dragon women, and more" (50). His case rests on the design on page 78, "the poem's only direct illustration of male homosexuality" (50–51), a key moment in the struggle between Urizen and Orc. Hobson speculates that this case of presumed fellation (much erased and shaded over) illuminates the mode of Orc's resistance, because although Urizen taunts Orc's efforts to resist tyranny by "feeding thyself / With visions of sweet bliss far other than this burning clime" (*The Four Zoas* 78:34–35), Hobson believes Orc resists Urizen by locating strength in visions of "male-male devotion, with homoerotic undertones" (53), visions Hobson unpacks as allusions to other texts that show males being tortured but bonding with other males (William Robertson's 1777 *History of the Americas,* John Stedman's 1796 *Narrative of a Five Year's Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*). Here and elsewhere Hobson works hard to present ingenious, innovative approaches that offer new ways to view Blake's complex representations, but he works so hard to support his own interpretation that he leaves little room for alternate interpretations or the multiple perspectives that make Blake's texts so complex, including less generous depictions of homosexuality. Thus one appreciates his rare admission that the depictions of lesbianism in *The Four Zoas* "can be viewed as negative" before he suggests that "other meanings emerge once we consider what these designs have in

common: All show an awareness of lesbian relations as an alternative to heterosexual gratification" (73).

Chapters four and five gamely tackle Blake's mature engagement with Milton to analyze Blake's intermittent references to homosexuality in the text and designs of *Milton* and illustrations to *Comus, Il Penseroso,* and *Paradise Regained.* In chapter four, "History, Homosexuality, and Milton's Legacy," Hobson insists on the need for historical rather than biographical or symbolic readings of the Bard's Song to appreciate the extent to which the bard speaks to the repression of homosexuality, and, through a series of historical twists and turns that take up James II, Charles I, and Charles II, and notably William III (rumored to be and satirized as homosexual), reads the Satan-Leutha episode as demonstrating how "homosexual desire is driven into hiding and ultimately cast out by the masculine entity that has harbored it, with evil consequences" (93). Satan becomes a "Sick-one" (*Milton* 12:48) when he expels Leutha because the expulsion represses homosexuality and produces a "rigid, exclusively heterosexual masculinity" (94). Although it would seem logical to take up the *Milton* designs that prompt Mitchell's looming question at this point, Hobson looks instead at Blake's designs for *Comus, Il Penseroso,* and *Paradise Regained* to argue for instances that support a liberal reading of homosexuality. Discussion of the *Milton* designs is reserved for the latter half of chapter five, "The Cruelties of Moral Law: Homosexuality and the Revision of *Milton,*" which begins with an extended discussion of Blake's potential allusions to contemporary antihomosexual campaigns in the "Calvary's foot" lines he added to copies C and D (*Milton* 4:21–28). When Hobson does turn to close analysis of four *Milton* illuminations that present "strongly homoerotic overtones" (130)—the full plate designs for William (pl. 29), Robert (pl. 33), Milton supporting a swooning figure (pl. 41), and Blake kneeling before Los in a sunburst (pl. 43)—the analysis is oddly clinical in explicating when and where there is a visible "penis-form" (138) rather than Hobson's overall thesis, which mostly emerges as a refutation of Marc Kaplan's arguments ("Blake's *Milton:* The Metaphysics of Gender," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 19 [1995]: 151–78).

In chapter six, "Blake's Synthesis: *Jerusalem,*" Hobson suggests "Blake's concern with homosexuality broadens in *Jerusalem* to include and even emphasize lesbian relations" (145), notably in chapter 1 when Albion faints after he sees Jerusalem "soft repos'd / In the arms of Vala, assimilating in one with Vala / The Lilly of Havilah" (*Jerusalem* 19:40–42), a scene Hobson sees as "remarkable for its frank depiction of lesbian relations" (151), and a revision of Blake's earlier view of lesbian relations. Instead of Oothoon's being prepared for heterosexual relations through her interaction with Leutha in *Visions,* "the heterosexual factor in the riverbank encounter is Albion's seizure of Vala, whose consequences, we shall see, are negative" (153). Negative because

rather than accept the lesbian relations Albion rejects them (he faints) and the women internalize that repressive view of their relations, Vala more so than Jerusalem, whose internalized guilt and shame becomes the external veil she weaves, a veil that appears as social oppression and war (157). As Hobson persuasively argues,

> The implications of the veil's transmutation are profound. If its sinister development is a direct manifestation of Vala's sexual guilt over the riverfront scene, a guilt that makes her accept her seizure by Albion (20:32–37), then she *becomes* the Vala familiar to us elsewhere in Blake—a deeply deceptive sexual mystifier of war and delusive religion—by acceptance of coercive male love, Albion's "furious love" (20:37), and by denial of her own homosexual aspect. Here, as in *Milton*'s Leutha episode, Blake implies that repression of homosexuality is one of the psychic constituents of social repression and war. This would be a remarkable conception in any time and place, and is particularly remarkable amid the deep hatred of homosexuality in Blake's England. (158)

In such moments Hobson's book becomes remarkable, but these moments are minute particulars that would be more persuasive were they woven into a larger system. Perhaps that is not possible for the work Hobson wants to do here, and does well: *Blake and Homosexuality* effectively shows how, in a culture whose overt and dominant discussion is militantly antihomosexual, Blake offers periodic expressions of liberal acceptance, the moments in the day Satan cannot find.

In the concluding chapter, Hobson neatly consolidates his overall argument: while early poems such as *Songs* and *Visions* express empathy for female desire, they show desire brought to fruition through male attention and even male aggression. But *Visions* begins to exhibit Blake's interest in exploring and accommodating sexual perversion which extends to masturbation and homosexuality. Male homosexuality serves as an emblem of political resistance in *The Four Zoas* and *Milton,* and lesbianism offers an alternative to male-dominated sexual relations in *Jerusalem.* Although Hobson notes that Blake's positive visual and textual references to homosexuality are relatively few in number and deeply encoded, he attributes Blake's "reticence" to the climate of the times and insists that "If relatively few, the homosexual elements in these poems are placed at moments of central significance" (177). To Hobson's credit, he makes his discussion of those moments resonate with central significance. While he is not entirely successful in demonstrating that Blake's periodic references to homosexuality generally indict "the brutality and hypocrisy of conventional morality" (3), or in claiming that positive references to homosexuality indicate that Blake was not "enduringly masculinist" (xiii),

Blake and Homosexuality offers a rich investigation and image of a Blake that many readers will want.

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Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials. Edited by Susan J. Wolfson. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001. Pp. 633. $49.50 cloth.

Felicia Hemans has historically been ill served by her editors, beginning already in her lifetime and continuing through most of the twentieth century. Many early writers felt as Frederic Rowton did when in 1853 he called Hemans's works "a perfect embodiment of woman's soul," by which (Rowton informs his readers) he means that "the delicacy, the softness, the pureness, the quick observant vision, the ready sensibility, the devotedness, the faith of woman's nature find in Mrs. Hemans their ultra representative." Rowton's "Mrs. Hemans" is, unfortunately, the poet whom generations of readers came to know: the sentimental celebrant of hearth, home, and nation whose poetic ethos seemed to be epitomized in "Casabianca," the famous recitation piece that has been parodied for a century and a half. Hemans has to bear some of the blame for what happened, of course, and indeed she expressed her regret, late in her brief life, at having invested so much time and effort in works that she regarded as less than what she was capable of producing but which, in purely *practical* terms, helped to pay the bills for her and her boys. She wrote what sold, and she was very good at doing so. But if the profit was considerable, so also was the cost.

Contemporaries and successors came during the nineteenth century to revere the domesticity they associated with much of Hemans's most popular work, work that seemed to embrace the ethic of recessive female domesticity that characterized early Victorian cultural values. In the process they conveniently ignored—or chose to forget—the Hemans who almost from the start of her poetic career asked the hard questions and who questioned alike empire and the materialist culture, the unequal and gendered nature of British society, and the resulting social and political inequities of British life. Positioned by her "critics" as a sweet songstress of domesticity, she came down to later generations in increasingly misrepresented fashion. This mattered little in the academic world (where readers of poetry have come in the last century increasingly to be cloistered), since the collapse of Romantic poetry on the literary stock market in the early twentieth century was followed by a rally that

lionized a small group of male poets at the expense of a very *large* group of prolific and influential contemporaries, many of whom were women.

The last two decades or so, however, have witnessed the recovery and systematic reassessment of the lives and works of women poets—indeed of women *writers*—of the Romantic period in England, together with a fresh examination of male contemporaries beyond the formerly sacred circle of six. With no poet has the impact of this activity been greater than it has with Felicia Hemans. Susan Wolfson's remarkable volume adds importantly to a number of recent projects that have at last taken Hemans *seriously* as a *serious* poet—rather than as an agreeable versifier of homey values—and the results are dramatic. In 2001 appeared the fine collection of scholarly essays on Hemans prepared under the dedicated editorship of Nanora Sweet and Julie Melnyk, followed by Paula Feldman's new edition of Hemans's *Records of Woman* and, most recently, Gary Kelly's selections from Hemans's prose and poetry.

But it is Wolfson's edition that sets the bar in a wholly new fashion, presenting a far more fully nuanced picture of its poet than is typically the case in "editions." Here we have, for instance, not only a generous selection of some of Hemans's very best poetry (nearly five hundred pages, including the excellent annotations and contextual materials), but also some fifty pages of Hemans's letters, and nearly a hundred pages of other people's words and impressions of her work, comments ranging from formal reviews in the periodical and the book press, to letters, memoirs, and reminiscences by her friends and acquaintances and by others who never met the poet but through her works. All this is bracketed by a concise introduction and an annotated bibliography that provides especially valuable information about editions prepared both during Hemans's lifetime and afterward.

The introduction prepares us well for the more intelligent reading that Hemans's work demands (and that Wolfson exhorts us to give it). It traces the central problem in "Hemans studies": the split between the famous sentimentalized poet, "Mrs. Hemans," and the largely unappreciated interrogator of cultural practices, cultural assumptions. Wolfson presents herself as a sort of "test case" for a modern reader of Hemans, explaining how she came to the poet's work at a time when it was either virtually ignored or presented for what it was not: a primer on domesticity and a comfortably imperialistic world-view. Even among feminist scholars the misreadings persisted, as if the familiar image of "Mrs. Hemans" was somehow invulnerable, impervious to scrutiny—much less to revision. The situation began to change, however, with scholars like Stuart Curran, for instance, whose pioneering work lent early impetus to Hemans's recovery, and with the subsequent efforts of others like Marlon Ross, Norma Clarke, Cora Kaplan, Isobel Armstrong, and Tricia Lootens, all of whom—along with Anne Mellor and Jerome McGann—were redrawing the portrait of "Mrs. Hemans" into one whose lines, angles, and colors are far less

soft, mild, and conformist than those of the old portrait. Susan Wolfson, who was herself among the first of this new generation of scholars to look carefully—and with fresh eyes—at Hemans's work, has been one of the poet's most clear-sighted and insightful advocates, and her new edition is another indicator of her commitment to Hemans.

Several points need making about the edition's format. First, the visually attractive text is clear and uncluttered, Princeton having wisely allocated generous expanses of white space on the pages, unlike older editions that often featured tiny print—frequently set in double columns. Wolfson's textual annotations are likewise kept out of the poetry's way, gathered as they are at the end of individual works. The same is true for introductory notes to individual volumes from which Wolfson has selected poems; these tight, neat introductions provide the reader with necessary historical, cultural, and bibliographical contexts without "overcoding" the poems that follow, so that the reader can engage each poem in an unfiltered and uninterrupted fashion—a practice that one might reasonably wish to see more often in *all* scholarly editions. The letters are treated with no less care and circumspection; Wolfson gives us what we need to know in order to make sense of the letters (and their context) and spares us any gratuitous editorializing. So, too, with the section called "Reception," wherein are assembled reviews, memoirs, and the life.

Will it ever be practical to publish a wholly "complete" Hemans? Considering that the generous *selection* of materials in Wolfson's edition runs to well over six hundred pages, it may not be. Perhaps in this age of electronic media the really "complete" Hemans will have to wait for a digital format, which may make such a project economically feasible (and perhaps even attractive) to a publisher. At the same time, though, the appearance within the space of two years of several major editions and a collection of new scholarly essays creates some pressure to produce just such a complete edition, because as readers of all sorts (and not just professional scholars) come back to Hemans they will inevitably *want* that fuller access. Ironically, it was a "popular" audience of general readers that gave Hemans her greatest fame (and profit) during her lifetime and for much of the balance of her century. And if those readers misread much of what she wrote, it is fair to observe that they were often *encouraged* to do so by a professional reviewing press and a sociopolitical Establishment whose interests were better served—indeed preserved—by a public perception of "Mrs. Hemans" than they might be by the more troubling aspect of the author of culturally destabilizing works like *The Siege of Valencia* or indeed any number of the poems in *Records of Woman.* Hemans began her public poetic career not with any design of becoming England's greatest domestic poet, after all, but rather with aspirations *and abilities* far more elevated: if she eventually became the most famous "poetess," that is not to say that she

ever abandoned her claims as a "poet." Indeed, both those claims and the conspicuous abilities that informed them were apparent early on to professional critics like the one who observed in 1820 that Hemans's ambitious poem, *Modern Greece,* was so excellent that it must be "the production of an academical, and certainly not a female, pen." Surely no woman could have written so well, he implies, but only a well educated man (like himself, perhaps). That critic was wrong in 1820, and subsequent critics (including countless professional, academic scholars) have been wrong in the hundred and eighty years that followed. But the balance is altering, and it is safe to say that there is no going back, not for Hemans, not for her female contemporaries, and not for any of the hundreds of others, men and women alike, whose works are being seen with new eyes by readers and critics who have in the long historical view come to appreciate the extent to which poets like Hemans teach us to regard the Establishment (and its canons) with suspicion, with scepticism, and with caution. It is one of the great triumphs of Susan Wolfson's fine new edition that she enables us to see so clearly and with such an unencumbered view the work of one of the greatest of British Romantic poets. This edition sets—and then meets—high standards for textual editing, for circumspect biography, and for intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural sensitivity.

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