Book Reviews/
Critiques de livres

**Novel Bodies: Disability and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century British Literature** by Jason S. Farr

**Sight Correction: Vision and Blindness in Eighteenth-Century Britain** by Chris Mounsey

Review by Kathleen Tamayo Alves, Queensborough Community College

In one of the foundational works in disability studies, David Turner writes, “Scholars of the eighteenth century ... face the problem of writing disability history before ‘disability’ existed in its modern sense.”¹ Turner explains that “the term ‘disabled’ was most often used in relation to fitness for military or naval service.”² Examining impairment in the eighteenth century, then, runs the risk of presentism. For Lynn Hunt, presentist practice in historical scholarship denotes a “moral complacency and self-congratulation” by scholars who seem to insert identity politics into their work.³ Given that Disability Studies arose from the rights-based activism of the 1970s and 1980s, however, Disability Studies is inherently rooted in advocating for an accessible present and future, and is therefore inseparably engaged with identity and human rights issues.

In a slight counterpoint to Hunt, David Sweeney Coombs and Danielle Coriale offer “strategic presentism” as a way to “think critically about the past in the present in order to change the present.”⁴ It is especially important to look into the eighteenth century, a period animated by debates over who counted as human and who did not, an age of brutal colonization and the destruction of Indigenous communities, an age of chattel enslavement, and the age that preceded the scientific formalization of eugenics, as the place to think critically about how we got here, when the debates over who counts as human continue today.

Literature scholars of disability studies Chris Mounsey and Jason S. Farr

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² Turner, 33.
engage with these ongoing debates in complementary, and at times challenging, ways and offer important interventions for how we study impairment in the period.

Mounsey’s book, *Sight Correction: Vision and Blindness in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, is appropriately and wittily titled because his work provides a corrective to historical and literary assumptions about sight impairment. Mounsey alerts the reader very early that this text comes from a personal place: “This book explores the realities behind the metaphors of sight, as I live a life where blindness is no metaphor and find many visual metaphors for truth disappointingly vague ... I will explore blindness from an empirical standpoint, in a way not dissimilar to that of the eighteenth century” (3). I found this positioning refreshingly candid, and it guides the reader's understanding of the high stakes of the cultural narrative of both the idea and reality of blindness. At its most radical, *Sight Correction* rejects the binary categories of ubiquitous terms in disability studies: not just “disabled” and “able-bodied” but also the “medical” and “cultural” models of disability. Mounsey chooses to give a “variable” account in his historical study using context and evidence gleaned from a breathtakingly deep dive into the archives, preferring to focus on the actual lives of eye surgery practitioners and the visually impaired.

The first of three parts, “Philosophy,” interrogates the aforementioned binaries and provides, in the concept of “variability,” the methodology and the theory that undergirds Mounsey’s book; that is, that “all people are ‘the same only different’ from one another” and that we may not “need a unifying concept at all” (4, 5). This section makes important interventions in the idea of sight correction in eighteenth-century philosophical debates: it pushes back against Peter Singer’s perspectives of a disability-free future and the cultural model of disability, and it offers a short history of the word “disabled” in the eighteenth century as an anachronistic term. The evidence that impaired sailors maintained employment on ships and elsewhere debunks the existence of compulsory able-bodiedness. And based on meticulous research in eighteenth-century records, Mounsey directly revises Lennard J. Davis’s theoretical idea of the “emergent” impaired body in his assertions about deafness, that empirical facts which determine the language of the hearing and the language of the deaf are not so different.

The following sections, “Medicine” and “Lives” support the book’s contention that medical intervention and the lived experience of blindness do not fit neatly in modern theoretical medical and cultural models of disability “probably because the very philosophical problems
explored [in “Philosophy”] have continued into modern philosophy” (62). Mounsey reminds us that unifying and sweeping concepts can be inaccurate and exclusionary if we are not careful.

The “Medicine” section covers medical interventions of blindness, though its histories read very much like the “Lives” chapters, which chronicle the personal experience of blindness. Mounsey takes us into the exciting and surprisingly animated conflicts between physicians and surgeons (“quacks” or “empiricks”), and reclaims the merit of the latter. For example, in a letter to Stella, Jonathan Swift calls William Read a social-climbing “mountebank,” but Mounsey’s comprehensive study of newspaper advertisements shows that Read gained his popular reputation and title of the “queen’s oculist” through industriousness and charity services for the poor (80). Mounsey also disputes the myth of the quack and patented cures, arguing that this discourse grew not from the efficacy of the medicine or treatment but from the conflict between doctors and surgeons (91). This section concludes with a claim that supports the flawed notion of compulsory able-bodiedness in the period: “There is no attendant sense of compulsory able-bodiedness demanded of their patients by the doctors arising from their medical intervention, nor from the patients’ raised expectation of cure from their doctors” (195).

The lively biographies of three blind poets in the “Lives” section serve to challenge the “disease-treatment-cure paradigm” that dominates the medicalization discourse of the eighteenth century. Through these histories, Mounsey reveals that Thomas Gillis, John Maxwell, and Priscilla Pointon did not experience compulsory able-bodiedness; rather, their lives evince a path toward personal safety based on economic independence. Through their literary output and their use of “their gifts of blindness” (275), each found the means to avoid financial precarity without the expectation of charity. They did not expect to be cured or able-bodied. Perhaps the most crucial and original contribution of the book is in its last lines: “No theory can account for these lives or produce a history of the blind from them. There are only individual lives” (276). Mounsey does not present these biographies as representative of a larger historical pattern but rather as stories of the lived experience of three particular blind persons.

Arguing from a different viewpoint, Farr’s *Novel Bodies*, relies on a more relational and flexible definition of disability, referring to variably-embodied figures in the novel that range from deaf prophets to enslaved people, and it persuasively demonstrates how the idea of disability shares the same kind of malleability as categories of gender and sexuality in the period. Unsurprisingly, Farr holds that able-bodied and heteronormative
ideologies are imbricated systems of domination (as these systems usually are). But, building from this point, Novel Bodies offers the exciting and hopeful “futures promised by these novels” (160). Reading through the non-procreative erotic desire and alternate kinships structures represented by variably-embodied characters within emerging exclusionary discursive formations of heteronormativity and able-bodiedness, Farr argues that these authors “employ disability and queerness in their fiction to critique and rework the social fabric—to imagine ‘novel’ social orders that rearrange widespread assumptions, principles, and social practices” (3). An accessible future is also a queer one.

Similar to Sight Correction, Novel Bodies begins with the philosophical question of the individual. Farr appraises the field’s over reliance on John Locke’s ideas about subjecthood and points out that Locke’s way to cultivate intellect by reaching “a happy state in this world” excludes the physically and intellectually impaired. Rather than relying on Locke’s now tired and ableist ideas about personhood, Farr, much like Mounsey, draws on educational and medical materials from the eighteenth century that more accurately theorize the lived experiences of impairment. The readings that follow skillfully “crip” these works of fiction: The History of the Life and Adventures of Duncan Campbell (1720), Eliza Haywood’s A Spy on the Conjurer (1720), Samuel Richardson’s Pamela (1740), a selection of Sarah Scott’s works (1754–66), Tobias Smollett’s The Expedition of Humphry Clinker (1771), Frances Burney’s Camilla (1796), Maria Edgeworth’s Belinda (1801), and Jane Austen’s Sanditon (1817). While eighteenth-century scholars are familiar with most of these works, Farr reorients our understanding of how disability and sexuality are inextricably linked and how these intersecting categories shape the novel’s form and content.

Representations of Duncan Campbell and his deafness varied, depending on the author’s purpose and the genre in which they wrote. Campbell embodied queerness but also normative masculinity. At times, he appears as “cosmically queer,” as angelic and outside of time, or as a “supercrip.” The same variability appears in discourses of deafness mediated through the period’s audism. In Pamela, Mrs Jewke’s variable body and desire become the “narrative prosthesis” that reinforces the heteronormative and sentimentally virtuous union between Pamela and Mr B. For Scott, who was disabled, impairment meant more than a metaphor. Millenial Hall represents impairment as a place of “social and physical pain” (72) while A Journey through Every Stage of Life and The History of Sir George Ellison sketch an “ideology of ability” (73) in which there is a hierarchy of ability, depending on race and class. This is a compelling observation, as this hierarchy still exists in
the present. *Humphry Clinker* engages with the concept of health and the regulation of bodies through medicalization. Farr has persuaded me to rethink my thoughtless use of “healthy” as a lexical indicator of marriage (or anything), as the term depends on heterosexual able-bodiedness to grant a romantic union its intelligibility and dominance. While the novel’s trajectory leads up to the “cure” of the chronically ill Matt Bramble and the marriage of young, heterosexual, able-bodied persons, Farr’s closer attendance to the union between the aging Tabitha Bramble and Obadiah Lismahago shows his readers a “queer displacement of the reproductive futurity” that undercuts the novel’s expression of (presumably) healthy heterosexuality. In a similar vein, the resolutions in *Belinda* and *Camilla* also depend on heteronormative and able-bodied systems, but Farr’s focus on queer and variably embodied women exhibits the limitations of such normative domestic arrangements. And in a brief coda, *Sanditon*’s lack of an ending resists the “healthy marriage” trajectory, letting a “spectrum of bodies and desires” “exist for their own sake” (169). Throughout *Novel Bodies*, Farr casts his readings of these novels in creative new directions, yet they are careful and nuanced, qualifying his readings in complex and sometimes contradictory layers. The common thread in these chapters is the positive imagining of expansive futures and possibilities, and for me, writing this review during a pandemic, this feels like a balm.

Perhaps the most important contribution of these two books for eighteenth-century studies is their resistance to facile assumptions. Through painstaking archival work, Mounsey questions the usefulness of the current theoretical framework of disability studies for exploring this period. And by expanding the definition of disability beyond impairment, Farr deftly makes concrete and comprehensible the degree to which the early novel engages with variably-embodied subjectivity and non-normative desire in inextricable ways that anticipate its own futurity into the present time. Both also serve as examples of the meaningful and sensitive approaches to ethically and accurately study the lives of impaired people with care.

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Systems Failure: The Uses of Disorder in English Literature  
by Andrew Franta  

A World of Disorderly Notions: Quixote and the Logic of Exceptionalism  
by Aaron R. Hanlon  
Review by Jesse Molesworth, Indiana University

Both Andrew Franta and Aaron Hanlon begin their recent studies of the novel with allusions to the writing of Jorge Luis Borges. Yet in many respects these allusions do much to illustrate the critical distance between the two. Franta alludes to Borges’s parable of the map that seeks to represent but ends up engulfing its intended subject. As Laurence Sterne would similarly caution, through Uncle Toby’s fascination with recreating the siege of Namur, the urge to order, or to represent in miniature, leads potentially to mania and madness. Hanlon alludes to Borges’s story of Pierre Menard, who in the process of translating Cervantes’s Don Quixote (1605, 1615) immerses himself so thoroughly in the work as to surpass it. The lesson, therefore, differs substantially: mania may well be the product of artistic emulation, but this fact does little to diminish its ultimate value. Unlike Toby’s map of Namur, whose status as imitator is never questioned, Menard’s Quixote offers something potentially more illuminating.

Such differences structure each critic’s attitude toward “disorder,” the keyword shared by their respective titles. For Franta, disorder is the inevitable product of the early novel’s urge toward organization, classification, enumeration, and schematization. As much as the so-called Enlightenment sponsored an urge toward organizing data into elaborate “systems”—in disciplines like philosophy, the natural sciences, political economy, and so forth—it simultaneously witnessed an acknowledgement of the inability of such systems to comprehend such data. As Franta writes, “Much of the long eighteenth century’s imaginative literature suggests that the Enlightenment and its legacy are just as strongly marked by a fascination with failure and an obsession with social forces that are seemingly irreducible to system” (3). As scholars, we are long accustomed to seeing writers like Samuel Johnson, Laurence Sterne, Tobias Smollett, William Godwin, Jane Austen, and Thomas De Quincey as investigating the manner by which individuals organize themselves into complex social collectives, or systems. What Franta seeks to demonstrate is the extent to which each attempt ends—inevitably and indelibly—in failure.
Hanlon, by contrast, seeks to reveal an order—or “logic,” as his title suggests—lurking within apparent disorder. Numerous scholarly studies have demonstrated the extent to which versions of Cervantes’s iconic character Don Quixote proliferated during the long eighteenth century, especially within Britain and the nascent American republic. Yet such studies have produced, in Hanlon’s formulation, a “Multiple Quixotes Problem,” in which quixotism has been made to stand for virtually anything and, therefore, for nothing. What unites such various versions of Quixote—offered by writers ranging from Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding, and Charlotte Lennox to Tobias Smollett, Royall Tyler, Charlotte Lucas, and Washington Irving—is the concept of exceptionalism, as formulated by political theorists like Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben. As Hanlon writes, “The Quixote’s ability to step outside of the rules and customs that govern his surrounding society render the Quixote an exceptionalist figure, one whose sense of moral superiority makes him an attractive character model for writers looking to critique or support social, moral, and political exceptions” (7). It is only upon initial inspection that incarnations of Quixote look random or haphazard. Throughout multiple guises—both male and female, politically radical and conservative, wealthy and poor, common and noble—the character of the quixote demonstrates remarkable intellectual consistency.

Franta’s thesis will not surprise anyone who has read Sterne, whose every sentence seems devoted to the undoing of systematic thought—whether seen in Walter Shandy’s theory of auxiliary verbs, or Uncle Toby’s interest in the complexities of siege-craft, or Tristram’s hopelessly outdated devotion to the importance of “animal spirits.” This is why the strength of the book lies in its investigations of presumed non-sceptics like Johnson, Godwin, and especially Austen. Johnson, for example, is positioned not simply as the inventor of literary biography. Rather, in a deft analysis of the odd moments in the Life of Savage (1744)—the opacity of Savage’s personality, his bizarre upstaging and occasional erasure from his own story, the blurring of fact and fiction—Franta argues for Johnson as its undoer: “Savage becomes a cipher in his own life—and an allegory of the problem of life writing” (24). Godwin is similarly positioned not simply as an opponent of Burkean conservative political thought. Rather, in spotlighting the ultimate failure of each of the three handshakes in Caleb Williams (1794)—between Tyrrel and Falkland, between Caleb and the robber Larkins, and between Caleb and Falkland’s servant Thomas—the novel sets itself equally against the utopianism of Paineite radicalism. “In Caleb Williams, handshakes fail not because the two parties involved fail to observe the
gesture’s significance,” writes Franta on Godwin’s scepticism toward Revolutionary fraternité: “handshakes fail precisely because of what they are intended to signify” (94).

Franta’s chapter “Jane Austen and the Morphology of the Marriage Plot” takes up the discussion initiated by Leo Bersani, Frances Ferguson, Alex Woloch, William Galperin, and others on the tensions between Austen’s commitment to realism of character and her equally strong commitment to the unrealism of the marriage plot. In brief but probing readings of Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1815), and Northanger Abbey (1817), he demonstrates the extent to which the latter (the ending in marriage) consistently disrupts the former (the representation of reality). Inasmuch as we might look to Austen for a mimetic representation of “social totality,” we must simultaneously attune our ears to the artifice demanded by the novel’s formal needs. “Conceiving of characters as parts for a plot or narrative functions rather than identities,” writes Franta, “situates them in the contexts of the stories they inhabit rather than the totalizing social system that is taken to be the novel’s ultimate frame of reference” (128). Austen reveals her allegiance to narrative form rather than social form through her allegiance to closure, which elevates necessity over contingency, or the needs of plot over the needs of character.

In focusing more minutely on fictions influenced by Cervantes, Hanlon’s book lacks the overall ambition of Franta’s. Yet it compensates by connecting such literary quixotes in the Cervantic tradition to the social and political contexts out of which they arose. Thus, Updike Underhill, the mock-nationalistic quixote of Tyler’s The Algerine Captive (1797) is presented as an American counterpart to Swift’s Lemuel Gulliver, whose mock-nationalism undergoes a substantial revision during his last voyage, to the country of the Houyhnhnms. In a similarly shrewd reading, Hanlon reads Captain John Farrago, the mock hero of Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s Modern Chivalry (1792–1815), as the “US foil” (105) to Fielding’s Parson Adams. The quixotism of each exemplifies a brand of “civic exceptionalism,” as Brackenridge translates Fielding’s criticisms of Walpole-era Whiggism into a newer engagement with the Federalism of Alexander Hamilton. Each quixote in the study therefore gains definition not only in relation to Cervantes’s original but also in relation to one another. Rather than counterposing Dorcasina, the mock-heroine of Tabitha Gilman Tenney’s Female Quixotism (106), to Lennox’s Arabella from The Female Quixote (1752), Hanlon finds striking resonances between the two: “When female quixotism crossed the Atlantic from Britain it maintained its class stringency and reproduced British notions of social rank even with a very different class structure” (107).
There is something virtuosic in this delicate balancing act, triangulating Spain, Britain, and America through the characters of Quixote/Gulliver/Underhill, Quixote/Adams/Farrago, Quixote/Arabella/Dorcasina, and others. Occasionally, the balance feels imposed, as though the very act of criticism were sharing in the desire for structure, order, and thematic consistency that one might find in a Fielding novel. Yet such qualms do little to dint the two-fold contribution made by Hanlon’s book. The first of these is related to its Transatlantic cast, which enables lesser-known American writers like Tenney and Lucas to share the spotlight with more canonical figures such as Swift and Fielding. The second of these is Hanlon’s overall point, that quixotes abound in cultures that breed a sense of exceptionalism. Insofar as Don Quixote serves as the “fulcrum” (22) for Cervantes’s deep ambivalence for the Golden Era of Spanish conquest, so too the quixotes in the British and American tradition express an ambivalence for the type of cultural vanity that results in colonial overreach.

I am tempted to think that were Franta to read Hanlon the former might find something vaguely quixotic in the latter—within the quest to understand and organize the “logic” underlying the presumed chaos of Quixote criticism. Likewise, I am tempted to think that Hanlon might find something defeatist, or doggedly postmodern, in Franta’s insistence on unknowability, impossibility, and inconsistency. Whether or not one’s taste runs to order (Hanlon) or disorder (Franta), one thing unites the two: each book offers some of the most incisive recent criticism on the early history of the novel. Such being the case, each deserves a wide readership.

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The Club: Johnson, Boswell, and the Friends Who Shaped an Age
by Leo Damrosch

Community and Solitude: New Essays on Johnson's Circle,
ed. Anthony W. Lee

Review by Teresa Saxton, University of Dayton

The Club and Community and Solitude both begin with the impetus for the creation of The Literary Club: Joshua Reynolds, seeing his friend Samuel Johnson struggling with depression, created the Club to get his friend out of the house and into a social setting. Both books consider the larger impact that the Club and its members had on British culture and the literary world. Each book also examines the influence of the Club on the individuals within it as well as the community they built. Though these two texts share a catalyst, their projects differ greatly. Damrosch’s The Club is a grand synthesis project, compiling the current state of research and a wealth of journals, letters, and, of course, the Johnson biographies to write a book that ranges from biography to cultural history. Community and Solitude seeks to establish new research and define the current conversations about Johnson’s circle. While ranging from reception history to narratological approaches, the core goal of this essay collection is to examine connection and community in the eighteenth century. Together, the books illuminate the complexity of eighteenth-century relationships and the nuances of London culture.

Damrosch’s book “seeks to bring to life the teeming, noisy, contradictory, and often violent world of eighteenth-century London” (10) and targets a broad audience. His approach is to use the voices of the subjects of the book as much as possible and, in doing so, he makes the eighteenth-century London world live through the eyes of the Club members. This biographical approach brings together different generational views and explores the different spheres of influence that the Club members curated. Damrosch keeps the Club central, calling it “the virtual hero of this story, which will trace the intersecting lives, interests, friendships, rivalries, and careers of this extraordinary group” (2). While the Club members are the focal point, the Club itself is merely a starting point as Damrosch moves into full biographies of Johnson and James Boswell, with historical context well beyond the Club.

Damrosch follows the traditional big hitters of the club with chapters on Reynolds, Edmund Burke, David Garrick, Adam Smith, and Edward Gibbon. Other chapters feature particular aspects of the culture,
such as empire and the theatre. Like Boswell’s biography (and as indicated in the subtitle), this telling of the Club is as much focused on Boswell as Johnson, and Boswell’s biographical information fills as many pages as Johnson’s. The choice is calculated to draw in a more popular audience—Boswell’s writings offer some of the most entertaining windows into day-to-day life of eighteenth-century London. Hester Thrale and Frances Burney are each given ample mention and are referred to as part of the “Shadow Club” at Streatham, but the book remains largely focused on the male-dominated spheres of London. Indeed, while Boswell’s journal is in the forefront often, Burney and Thrale’s own well-known journals are only occasionally used, and, while Damrosch often discusses the “Shadow Club” at the Thrale home, the focus remains on the Club members who were there.

Of potential interest to modern readers is the considerable role that mental health plays in Damrosch’s narrative. The “hypochondria” of both Boswell and Johnson is woven into their interactions with others and their reception by their friends and the public. Damrosch also gives space to historical speculations about possible medical diagnoses of obsessive compulsive and bipolar disorders for the two historical figures. The book uses such discussions to provide an engaging illustration of time, place, and character for a wide audience. For scholars who know Boswell’s biography and eighteenth-century London well, the book offers primarily a useful synthesis of biographies and cultural history rather than new information. I would be remiss not to mention that the book is available on audio—ably read by Simon Vance—though this format has the notable downside of missing the illustrations. This text will be an easy recommendation to early students of the eighteenth century who are attempting to grasp the larger culture as well as to those who might like to contextualize the period better. In fact, the book was first recommended to me by my husband, an ecologist, and we agreed that the book is one we were sad to end because Damrosch shows (or reminds) us of how vibrant and interesting this remarkable group of people was.

As sprawling as The Club is, Community and Solitude is as focused. The book brings together essays to “excavate” the “rich community of friendships—and antagonisms” that Johnson built (1). The book aims to “clarif[y] the great influence Johnson exerted upon his age” through scholarly examination of private relationships and literary texts; secondarily, the collection “explores some of the larger aesthetic and cultural domains these relationships and texts represent and illuminate” (2). The chapters emphasize specific relationships and often consider less frequently studied “characters.” For example, John Radnor explores Johnson’s mentoring relationships with Bennet...
Langton and Robert Chambers, and Christine Jackson-Hozberg focuses on James Elphinston’s professional relationship with Johnson. The collection includes scholarly arguments that create intertextual connections or new means to consider the eighteenth-century social world that are organically united by their shared concern about the nuances of these eighteenth-century relationships.

The collection is split into two parts—personal relationships and literary relationships. Johnson frequently mixed these two spheres, but editor Anthony W. Lee has nicely distinguished the two sections. The personal includes chapters that look primarily at letters and privately exchanged materials, while the literary relationships consider published works and comparative studies. Each essay stays true to the central conceit of examining relationships and “celebrates the fruits of Johnson’s aversion [to solitude] by tracking and illuminating his recourse to the tangible social and cultural world about him” (1).

For the ECF audience, the second section’s emphasis on the literary world is likely to be of most interest. Containing seven of the ten essays, this section explores intertextual relationships, with Johnson serving as a touchpoint for each. Several chapters look primarily at one author. For example, James E. May explores Oliver Goldsmith’s rewriting techniques and shows how “after years of straightening out others’ sentences, he brought considerable skill to late revisions of his earlier works” (79). May then argues that Goldsmith used the growing review community—including Johnson’s own reviews and criticism—to determine future editions of his work. Lee’s chapter turns attention to Arthur Murphy and his literary inspirations. Taking Murphy’s *A Poetical Epistle to Mr. Samuel Johnson, A.M.* as the central text, Lee maps out “the dimensions of Johnson’s presence within, as well as absence from the poem, while also illuminating the dynamic structure of what actually turns out to be a complex, sophisticated, and compelling, if neglected text” (156). Finally, Lance Wilcox’s chapter is the only one to look closely at Johnson’s own writing and breaks down how Johnson used four different narrators to represent his professional and personal relationship with Richard Savage in his *Life of Savage*. Wilcox argues that this text, rather than Johnson’s famous letter to Lord Chesterfield, marks his break from the patronage system (133).

Other essays in this section do more comparative work that often addresses larger cultural history studies. Elizabeth Lambert gives a fascinating read of the various ways that the Johnson circle responded to slavery. The essay not only notes the pro- and anti-slavery positions of Burke, Boswell, and Johnson but also considers how these moral positions affected the closeness of each friendship. Later, Claudia Thomas
Kairoff compares the travel writing and sensibilities of Anna Seward and Johnson. She argues that the two show a generational divide. Kairoff concludes that Seward sought out “themes of solitude as place and state of mind, of sensibility, and of sublimity,” while Johnson approached both Ossian and the Highland countryside with questions of economy and use (210). Likewise, Marilyn Francus explores the generational divide between Burney and Johnson through their responses to fame. She argues that Burney’s resistance to Johnson’s advice on this subject indicates a shift away from confrontational wit and literary sparing, while highlighting their different backgrounds and personalities. Rather than a generational difference, Christopher Catanese compares Johnson’s work in the popular press with the scholarly work of his contemporary Thomas Warton to argue that both respond to and fear the popular audience as a threat to the author. These works together place Johnson and his circle into larger conversations on eighteenth-century literature.

Both books consider Johnson’s place in the generational milieu of his time. Like Johnson near the end of his life, Johnson’s Circle studies can threaten to feel like vestiges of previous generations of scholars, holding onto traditional hierarchies of what is worthy of scholarly attention. Each of these books follow closely in the tradition of Johnson scholars but remind us that the richness of the record around this group of eighteenth-century lives is deep and illustrative of so many larger questions. Johnson still has a reason to “spread his shadow” over the intellectual and cultural life of the century.

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Defending Privilege: Rights, Status, and Legal Peril in the British Novel by Nicole Mansfield Wright
Review by Gerard Carruthers, University of Glasgow

Conceptions of the eighteenth-century British novel as primarily in tune with free-market, individualistic tendencies that are also somewhat proto-democratic (in capitalistic fashion) have been challenged in criticism from the 1990s. Especially since then, readings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction have problematized that older, essentially Whiggish reading of a “progressivist” novel. The structures of power and identity-perception therein, in newer critical narratives, have generated a much more nuanced account of the history of the novel. Nicole Mansfield Wright invites us to think in a concentrated way about the novel as plaintive (and sometimes plaintiff) conservative vehicle from the 1760s to the 1820s.

Essentially a series of absorbing, critical case studies, Defending Privilege is divided into two loose but helpful sign-posting sections. In the first, “Downward Mobility and the Safety Net of the Law,” welcome attention is paid to Tobias Smollett’s The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves (serialized 1760–61). Its central character, the seemingly picaresque Greaves, is read as an “elite traveler” (34), an outsider within the contemporary chaos and flux of society who needs protection from institutions, such as the law, that have been degraded by the loosening of the hierarchical structures of Britain. With admirable fairness, Mansfield Wright identifies this conservative but not completely reactionary terrain of Smollett’s as helpfully drawing attention to “the ideology of rights and due process” and opening up discussions about “oppression” (54). There is some thematic cross-cutting in a fascinating discussion of Smollett’s Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753) in its internationalist outlook and (up to a point) its reversal of anti-Semitic cultural stereotypes; of value also is a precise hooking into the literary critical consideration of Smollett’s real-life battles in the legal courts. The second treatment within part 1 deals with the fictions of Charlotte Smith in the 1790s. Smith is bracingly read as “the first English female author to adopt a thriving Continental tradition of legal discourse for laypeople” (56). Smith, the “genteel victim” par excellence—and self-portrayed as such—was enabled in this venture by her notorious family difficulties as a separated wife attempting to make a living amid complicated family and family-business circumstances. As well, her work as a translator of French legal cases was useful in the writing of her novels, such as Emmeline (1788), which provided consideration of the technicalities of the law, and were of potential practical usage for
both the bourgeoisie and the masses. Through fictional reflection on such details, however, *Emmeline* is not merely some kind of “self-help” book but essays social and legal disempowerment (most especially for women). As with Smollett, Smith’s writing, logically enough, is from a class (bourgeois as opposed to the former’s preferential option for the aristocracy) whose power was being challenged as the eighteenth century progressed. Both authors, writing complaint from privileged positions were, nonetheless, asking clear questions of universal social relevance. In the case of Smith, this reading reveals the novelist as more of a proto-feminist than is sometimes thought.

The second section, “The Pen as a Weapon against Reform of the Law,” turns to Walter Scott’s *Redgauntlet* (1824), a novel about the intrigues within a (fictional) third Jacobite rebellion, smugglers, and mob rioting. Mansfield Wright produces a sophisticated reading of the novel’s “marginalized grievance” and “privileged fear” (85), and sets these themes in the context of Scott’s use of the epistolary mode as a crucial means of mediating voice. “Scott’s protagonists ... are professionally trained in the law, and they face a balancing act between, on the one hand, representing the lowly and, on the other, distancing themselves to assert their own authority” (93). *Redgauntlet* is a work portraying professionalism (the law) as the cornerstone of a paternalistic society. Morally sincere, according to his own lights, Scott could not have foreseen what he might almost have been warning of: a populist future of “televised court sessions and sensationalistic news articles in which short-lived public attention to a marginalized person’s quotidian legal struggle is construed as something of a substitute for justice” (107).

The final treatment looks at the proslavery novel *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827) by the mysterious, probably pseudonymous, Cynric R. Williams, and the anonymous *Marly; or, A Planter’s Life in Jamaica* (1828). Mansfield Wright points out that “the literary output of British proslavery writers remains curiously underexamined” (111). That curiosity is probably answered by the fact that the views of such individuals are evermore taboo. To her credit, she follows her own critical curiosity, although unlike the other chapters she preambles a little longer before reaching the primary matter in this one. The contextual history of the law that she usefully assembles might have been more readily integrated into the discussion of the two novels. *Hamel* recounts a failed slave rebellion and portrays the rebelling people in their self-discipline (sometimes intentionally perhaps, sometimes not so intentionally) as exemplary to the enslavers. Suppressing their liberties (including their legal testimony in situations of conflict), the enslavers find that the autonomous potential they observe is replete. Cautioning
against this as its author does in the emotive and dramatic form of the novel, Mansfield Wright opines (rightly, surely), “The author of Hamel made a mistake in the choice of the novel as a literary vehicle for the proslavery agenda” (130). Marly impressed contemporary reviewers with its authenticity of detail and purpose from the point of view, supposedly, of a real-life enslaver. Mansfield Wright draws attention to the contradictions and inconsistences, including the fact that the author-narrator alternates between conveying callous detachment and thoughtfulness on the plight of the enslaved people. However, this precisely draws attention to the legal voice and status in general of enslaved people in the early nineteenth century. Ironic undercutting can be a quality most difficult tangibly to pinpoint, and one might almost believe that Marly is a sardonic, sophisticated abolitionist work from the reading provided here. In any case, the disinterment of the ostensibly proslavery voice in Defending Privilege presents an interesting potential opportunity for further scholarship in an age when we tend to be too squeamish about points of view and subject matter that are rebarbative.

A short coda meditates on the contemporary political scene and how present-day rhetoric around representation and the law might not be any more sophisticated than the (often quite sophisticated) narratives of the novel of two hundred and more years ago. It ends with the intriguing and very current thought that reading of these novels among other things might aid “recognition of the common ground between conservative and humanitarian values [and] could help facilitate the drawing together of disparate interests into a coalition to oppose the specter of authoritarianism” (154). The case for “useful reading” made by the author is sensible and pedagogically useful, as it wisely forbears from cruder types of presentism. One small slip as she traverses this modern terrain is the author’s reference to “David” when it should be William Rees-Mogg as co-author of The Sovereign Individual (1996).

This monograph, written with commendable clarity, wears its substantial learning lightly. Ranging across the novel form, legal history, gender, race, and class, it will interest any scholar of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novel.

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Essai de Poétique historique du roman au dix-huitième siècle
par Jan Herman

Critique littéraire par Nathalie Kremer,
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Le livre de Jan Herman, fruit de plus de trente années de recherches et d’enseignement dans le domaine de la littérature française, combine un savoir inégalable sur la production romanesque et le discours critique et théorique de l’âge classique avec de patientes enquêtes et des réflexions tenaces sur la légitimité du genre fictionnel.

Ce genre qu’on appelle « roman » et qui tend à se répandre de façon spectaculaire au cours du XVIIIᵉ siècle malgré les critiques sévères qu’il affronte consiste, à y regarder de près, en un ensemble hétérogène de formes narratives (dominé par le roman-mémoires et le roman par lettres) qui néanmoins se réclament toutes d’un « code poétique » dont Herman propose l’analyse. Il ne s’agit pas pour le chercheur d’élaborer une théorie des règles et des principes de la littérature romanesque tels qu’ils sont édictés dans divers traités ou écrits sur le roman—de tels textes critiques existent mais sans s’imposer vraiment à l’ère où seules les poésies dramatique et épique légifèrent encore sur le plan théorique—mais d’étudier les conventions de la prose narrative telles qu’elles s’établissent à travers des codes ou protocoles narratifs à l’œuvre dans la pratique fictionnelle même. « L’objet de cet ouvrage », écrit Herman, « est d’étudier dans quelles circonstances et par quels moyens un ensemble de formules narratives novatrices—le plus souvent écrites à la première personne—s’institue peu à peu comme un genre » (viii). Au-delà de l’hétérogénéité de ses formes, l’écriture romanesque s’impose comme une pratique foncièrement autoréflexive, intégrant son propre commentaire et réfléchissant sur elle-même, pour livrer ainsi les clés de lecture de son « code poétique ».

Dans ses travaux antérieurs, le spécialiste du roman du XVIIIᵉ siècle avait surtout étudié la question de la légitimation du genre dans son rapport avec les instances critiques et théoriques de la littérature de l’époque, dans le sillage des travaux de Georges May (Le Dilemme du roman, 1963) notamment. L’Essai de Poétique historique du roman au dix-huitième siècle examine pour sa part le mécanisme de fonctionnement même de la fiction romanesque dans son rapport non pas à la critique, encore largement hostile au genre, mais au lectorat: à ce public avide de fiction narrative qui, loin de la condamner, la consomme et la réclame. Pour « plaire » au public—pour se légitimer en se faisant agréer par celui-ci—le roman se moule sur la doxa contemporaine, c’est-à-dire sur les préjugés, les opinions et les croyances plus ou moins
implicites du public, sources des attentes et désirs inconscients de celui-ci, pour les confirmer ou au contraire les brusquer. Le « code poétique » qui s’élabore dans la pratique romanesque n’est autre qu’une « négociation » perpétuelle entre la fiction et la doxa qui s’élabore d’une façon conventionnelle, c’est-à-dire rituelle, en suivant un protocole reconnaissable. Le protocole poétique—dont le topos du manuscrit trouvé est emblématique—est ainsi une convention littéraire qui assure la reconnaissance de la fiction par le public, et par là son fonctionnement même: pour lire une fiction, il faut bien d’abord accepter d’y entrer, et de jouer son jeu. Le livre de Herman entend reconstituer les conditions, les termes et les enjeux de cette convention littéraire que le roman négocie avec le public.

Il montre ainsi comment le XVIIIe siècle forme le terrain de jeu privilégié de l’élaboration de la fiction romanesque comme négociation avec la doxa. Négociation, car le roman s’est entièrement renouvelé depuis le Moyen Âge ou la Renaissance, dominés par une « esthétique mimétique textuelle » (25 et passim), où le roman se profile comme une imitation de textes. Héritier de cette mimésis textuelle, le roman dit classique s’attache à la renouveler sur le plan poétique en la transgressant. D’où la nécessité de négocier avec l’opinion publique pour faire agréer la nouvelle pratique fictionnelle. « Marginales ou marginalisées, les formules [conventionnelles de la fiction] ont à se légitimer face à cette doxa. Elles ne se conforment pas à ses exigences ni aux modèles canonisés par le centre du système [littéraire], mais tentent de les transformer dans un triple processus de négociation » (725). C’est en effet sous trois angles que Herman étudie le rapport entre fiction et doxa, qui sont autant d’accords ou de pactes implicites conclus avec le public pour fonder la pratique narrative en genre à part entière: le pacte de visibilité, le contrat de lecture et la convention de participation. Dès lors que ces trois négociations se trouvent réalisées, les formules narratives protocolaires constituent le discours narratif en genre romanesque (383–84).

Le pacte de visibilité touche à l’auteur ou plutôt à son ethos: aux façons dont les auteurs peuvent « paraître » à travers ou à l’aune de leurs textes aux yeux de leurs lecteurs. À côté de l’anonymat, du pseudonyme ou de la fictionnalisation, la posture d’auteur la plus récurrente est celle de la dénégation: « je ne suis pas auteur » (mais simple éditeur/rédacteur/traducteur/découvreur du manuscrit). Ces diverses scénographies auctoriales sont autant de manières pour les auteurs de négocier avec la doxa du public pour assurer la transmission de leurs écrits.

Le contrat de lecture est une négociation qui concerne le renouvellement thématique et formel de la prose narrative en assurant « une nouvelle manière de lire » (comme l’indique bien la quatrième de couverture.)
du livre). Celle-ci repose sur le rejet de l’étiquette de « roman » pour proposer des formules narratives novatrices: le roman-mémoires et le roman par lettres, qui s’érigent en modèles narratifs avant de devenir des genres confirmés, promeuvent de nouveaux codes poétiques comme l’individuel, le particulier, le naturel, l’unique, le vrai etc. Le rôle crucial du topos du manuscrit trouvé en tant que « fiction protocinaire » consiste ici à déclencher la fiction, tout en la prolongeant intrinsèquement.

La convention de participation, enfin, invite le lecteur « à accepter les règles du jeu de l’illusion proposé par le texte » (34), en cherchant à établir sa participation à la fiction. Pour que la fiction soit agrémentée par le public, il faut en effet établir un « consensus de vérité » qui aura non pas valeur d’accréditation, mais de déclenchement pragmatique de la « feintise ludique partagée » (21). À travers l’affirmation (prétendue) à l’authenticité du texte, le protocole du manuscrit trouvé a ici pour but d’introduire à la vérité-de-la-fiction, à permettre l’adhésion à l’univers fictionnel comme univers « autonome » du monde réel.

d’illusions fictionnels.

Ces dossiers sont encadrés par une solide « introduction théorique et méthodologique » (3–34) et une section finale d’« ouvertures et clôtures » (635–702), où la difficulté de commencer aussi bien que de terminer un texte fictionnel se trouve abordée, à l’horizon de ce que Herman baptise significativement « la fin de la vraisemblance » (689) à l’âge classique. Une « Bibliographie raisonnée » adossée à un « synopsis » du livre (725–29) résume efficacement l’optique et la structure de l’ouvrage, en offrant de surcroît une synthèse brillante de la quasi-totalité des travaux critiques qui ont été fournis jusqu’à ce jour sur le champ littéraire du long XVIIIe siècle, entre 1670 et 1800.

Les passionnés du roman et de la période early modern comme les chercheurs les plus avisés trouveront largement de quoi nourrir leur enthousiasme dans ce qui apparaît comme une véritable « somme » sur l’art romanesque.

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Novel Cleopatras: Romance Historiography and the Dido Tradition in English Fiction, 1688–1785 by Nicole Horejsi
Review by Gillian Dow, University of Southampton

Do we need another account of the origins of the novel? It has been some years since most edited collections, monographs, histories, and handbooks contributing to the field started with a defence, or at least a question, posed rhetorically, and the field was never quite as saturated as was once claimed. Alternative versions of the story of the novel’s rise continue to find enthusiastic readers. The hybrid nature of the genre is now fully acknowledged: the eighteenth-century novel is an art form that reworks, refashions, and reuses source material from other genres and languages. To these accounts, Nicole Horejsi adds a welcome twofold approach: a revision of the history of the eighteenth-century novel in English that “foregrounds its ancient origins, its dynamic relationship to epic, and its centrality to neoclassical print culture,” alongside a consideration of “the essential role of women writers in this history” (8).

The key role British women writers played in the rise of the novel in eighteenth-century England has long been recognized in scholarly accounts.
And while their counterparts across the Channel—Scudèry, Villedieu, Graffigny, etc.—have been somewhat neglected, in comparison, in accounts of the novel in French, they too are now receiving increasing attention from scholars working in both French and English. Horejsi’s focus is firmly on the novel’s classical roots. The result is a compelling account of the importance of classical models for middle-class women who—far from being denied the neoclassical education of their brothers—took up stories of Dido and Cleopatra in their own tales. Central to this account is the *Aeneid*, although Horejsi takes care to point out that *Novel Cleopatras* is neither an argument about Virgil nor really about Dido or Cleopatra. Rather, it “situates eighteenth-century women writers at the heart of a long tradition of rereading Virgilian epic and, at the same time, foregrounds their participation—at the intersections of ‘novel,’ ‘romance,’ ‘epic,’ and ‘history’—in neoclassical culture” (22). It does so through careful close readings of a broad temporal range of diverse works, in roughly equal parts, the first section focusing on “Demythologizing Dido,” the second on “Mythologizing Cleopatra.” Chapters run from Jane Barker’s *Exilius; or, The Banished Roman* (1688) to Clara Reeve’s *The Progress of Romance* and its appendix *The History of Charoeb* (1785), taking in Charlotte Lennox’s *Female Quixote* (1752) and Sarah Fielding’s *Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757). And the discussion is by no means confined to these texts, but ranges over the writing careers of these authors more generally. Readers who are not familiar with the French romances of Scudèry and La Calprenède will find, in the chapter on Lennox in particular, a valuable gloss for these now-unwieldy, while enormously influential, tomes. Comparatists may, on the other hand, wish that Horejsi had engaged with more of the recent work on these French authors; for example, the work of Marc Fumaroli or Alain Viala might have been useful additions to Joan Dejean, although not all that is of use has been translated into English.

That said, this is a book unapologetically and primarily about English prose fiction: I do not wish it otherwise. The focus throughout is on English women authors, although Horejsi points out in her epilogue that it did not begin as a book about predominately women novelists, and there is a fine chapter focused on revising the *Aeneid* in Henry Fielding’s *Amelia*. Horejsi takes Fielding’s acknowledged indebtedness to Virgil seriously. By looking at his three major Dido figures—Amelia herself, Miss Mathews, and Mrs Bennet-Atkinson—she reads the novel as a new epic model that places the heroines at the centre and thus “challenges the masculine aristocratic elitism of the *Aeneid*” (84).
Fielding emerges as a radical rewriter, redefining Virgilian epic, and both domesticating and democratizing the heroic ideal to create what Horejsi points out is the “heroism of everyday life” (65).

It is a mark of the book’s success that it made me want to read more about the engagement of women across Europe and across time with the classical precedents that Horejsi discusses. Christine de Pizan famously and deliberately fashioned herself as a female Dante, engaging with Virgil via her rewriting of Dido in the Cité des Dames in the early fifteenth century; Anne Le Fèvre Dacier was the first woman to translate Homer; Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, who translated—or rather adapted—Amelia, wrote mid-century fiction that can be usefully compared to Charlotte Lennox’s and Frances Brookes (her translator). There are of course a great many more women who translated Latin and used classical sources for their own creativity. Other scholars will want to take up Horejsi’s challenge to write women more fully into accounts of the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, to think more fully about the importance of seventeenth-century romance in the century that followed, and indeed to engage with eighteenth-century translations of Virgil and Homer more broadly. For these scholars, Novel Cleopatras will provide invaluable points of departure. Certainly, we need more origin stories for women authors, who continue to spring up, surprisingly, without “ancestresses” (the recovery project’s original framing has had a lasting legacy). Further exploration of both historical networks and intertextualities will help to further complicate the accounts we give. This book is by no means the last word on the topics of eighteenth-century fiction, women’s writing, and the use of epic or myth, nor does it claim to be. It stands, rather, as a mark of the vibrancy of these interconnected fields. As such, it should be read by all who are interested in the fiction of the eighteenth century, with all its complexities, and in all its incarnations.

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Erotic Citizens: Sex and the Embodied Subject in the Antebellum Novel by Elizabeth Dill
Review by Jennifer Harris, University of Waterloo

It is a curious feature of the early American novel that representations of illicit sex serve as a stand-in for considerations of political virtue. Early American novelists—channeling their Puritan inheritance and their anxiety over their own revolutionary tendencies—transformed the City on a Hill into the Republic on a Hill, whose citizens must be virtuous not for the sake of a Christian God, but for the benefit of the nascent nation. Literary critics from Cathy Davidson to Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have spent the last two decades engaging this formulation. Erotic Citizens furthers this discussion. Conceptualizing novels about women previously characterized as fallen—whether they consented or not to their loss of virginity—as “ruin narratives,” a genre of both sensationalism and sentimentalism, Elizabeth Dill takes up the ways in which the authors of these texts explore the obligation of the self to the other. In this instance, she argues, the authors posit that in a democracy, “it is the body of the other that becomes the custodian of the self” (3), meaning that the individual demonstrates their democratic potential by recognizing the other as a democratic subject as well, as opposed to a sexual subject. This produces a series of related questions about the effect of the failure to recognize the other—inevitably gendered female—in this way. As Dill asks: “How does the compromised chastity of the female body speak to resistance against the political capital of an individual? What does it mean when the totality of a citizen’s identity is vulnerable to the charms of sex and love? And why do so many early American novelists imagine the crisis of citizenship as an encounter ending in sexual ruin? What is the power of sex in this age of democratic beginnings?” (5). Erotic Citizens addresses these questions and more over six expansive chapters. The chronology begins with British texts that were nonetheless widely circulated in the colonies, the Earl of Shaftesbury’s Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times (1711) and Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa (1748). Both appeared frequently in the letters of the Founding Fathers and their circles in discussions of political virtue—no less than John Adams famously commented, “Democracy is Lovelace and the people are Clarissa.” In Dill’s case, she is less concerned with any potential seductive trappings of democracy and more interested in how sex destabilizes individual will and the rational singular self, posited to be constitutive of the democratic project. Likewise, while she accounts for the process of sympathetic identification in these narratives and its importance in
nation-building, she again foregrounds the role of illicit sex and the sexed body, grounding individuals in corporeal networks (31–34).

Readers looking for easily assignable discrete excerpts will not find them here; the analysis weaves back and forth, assuming a familiarity with arguments and texts introduced in various chapters. Following an introductory chapter that establishes key terms, the text turns to the transatlantic Anglo-American context and a consideration of Shaftesbury vis-à-vis moral philosophy and Enlightenment discourse, as well as his representation of the ontological consequences of sexual violence for the individual who enacts it. From there, it is a logical progression to the novels of Charles Brockden Brown, and the ways in which illicit sex has the potential to destabilize autonomy through a variety of mechanisms. Attending particularly to how these concerns produce the body aesthetically, Dill argues an essentializing force is deployed by authors to demonstrate the consequences of illicit desire—in Brown’s renderings, coded as incest. In these works, the body itself is a tyrant, according to Dill. Her reading of Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette* (1797) foregrounds this tyranny, in the process providing a darker analysis than most. In a consideration of the three primary characters, they are framed as not merely seduced, but more pointedly captive to their desires, both sexual and sociable.

Dill avoids a discussion of the spectacle that the demise of *The Coquette*’s heroine provides, as it does not appear on the page—though it is worth noting that, given the novel’s real-life inspiration, the novel itself functioned as a form of spectacle. Instead, Dill charts a trajectory from earlier stories of seduction and incest, such as those penned by Brown and Foster, to later works of the 1850s situating spectacle as a later phenomenon. Exploring the connection between spectacle and martyrdom in the chapter on William Wells Brown’s *Clotel* (1853), Nathaniel Hawthorne, and others, Dill argues that the scenes of spectacle staged by authors are in fact not punitive, but are subversive, implicating communities while also uniting them (129–30).

These readings are, overall, astute and nuanced. Embedded in moral and political philosophy, the close readings draw out the threads that reveal fissures and fault-lines in the democratic project, and show us how authors sought to creatively address the same. For the sake of economy, Dill treats the nation as a more or less stable entity, only gesturing to the significant political and demographic shifts that occurred between the publication of William Hill Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). This works in terms of foregrounding the central themes of the study and exploring the key questions that drive the analysis. At times, however, it would
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have been useful to momentarily pause to consider how various authors were positioning their texts in relation to notable political and cultural shifts. There is a vast difference between Foster’s attempt to render the life of a woman she probably knew and Hawthorne’s deployment of the Puritan past via the fictional Hester Prynne sixty years later. While Dill convincingly and importantly links the use of “sentimental martyrdom” to the radicalization of agency by both Hawthorne and William Wells Brown (131), the description of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs as a novel that rewrites *Clarissa* is more challenging. Neither Jacobs or Wells Brown is situated in regards to the work of the Black Press or other African American authors. Their consideration here enriches such a study, and they both benefit from the analysis of their genre-bending innovations in relation to sentimental and sensational literature. Yet it is useful to recall that Jacobs and Wells Brown lived in a different republic than Hawthorne—one that, for African Americans, was not a republic at all.

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*Writing about Animals in the Age of Revolution* by Jane Spencer
Review by Julie Murray, Carleton University

The “animal turn” in literary studies of the last several decades has been fruitful, especially its convergence with critical animal studies, ecocriticism, and the environmental humanities. As scholars of the long eighteenth century, though, we might say that animals have always been with us. To study enlightenment thought is always already to train our attention on the animal, as critics such as Heather Keenleyside, Tobias Menely, and Lynn Festa have shown. *Writing about Animals* enters this established field with a specific focus on the ways in which the “eighteenth-century shift in attitudes to human-animal relations was intimately bound up with the emergence of radical claims based on the concept of universal human rights” (6). Seven chapters range across the question of the human-animal relation as it is inflected by intra-species relations “between human beings” specifically in terms of “gender, race, class, and age,” with the consequence that animals stand as “central figures in the debate about revolution” (2). The book unfolds the problem at the heart of campaigns for rights in the late eighteenth century: claims for the rights of women, the enslaved, children, or the
poor (all subjects of individual chapters) were premised on anxious arguments about, and justifications for, the vast distance of humans from animals, whereas nascent campaigns for animal rights at the time emphasized the tender proximity of human and non-human animal life and thus the ethical obligation that the former owed to the latter.

There is much to admire in Jane Spencer’s wide-ranging study. The breadth of reference is impressive and takes in great swathes of late eighteenth-century writing: novels, poetry, political polemic of various kinds, natural history, anti-slavery writing, and literature for children. Discussions of individual works, from the novel *Mornton* (1814) by the underappreciated Scottish novelist and animal rights advocate Margaret Cullen, to Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, to the responses by writers like Robert Southey to Edmund Burke’s infamous invocation of the “swinish multitude,” are lively and brimming with insight. In some measure, Spencer’s book is about the problem posed by the animal for late eighteenth-century campaigns for human rights. It seems to take as a given the *humanity* that grounds human rights. Yet, what is the human that is in tension with animals? What is the humanity claimed by human rights? These questions have been taken up by Keenleyside, Menely, and Festa (Festa’s *Fiction Without Humanity* likely appeared too recently for Spencer to include). All three critics recognize the crucial, constitutive role of literary form in the making of the human-animal relation. More specifically, in their attention to figurative language and literary devices such as personification, all three are concerned with literary form at its most seemingly ostentatious, even aesthetically flagrant, and thus productively estranging.

A recurring claim throughout the book, in contrast, is that by the end of the eighteenth century, “a drive towards naturalism united natural history, imaginative literature, and animal advocacy” (19). In suggesting that greater naturalistic representation of animals coincides with—and offers an ethical framework for—greater humanity to animals, Spencer’s argument falls prey to a progress narrative in which realist representation in literature comes to usurp figurative, allegorical, and fabular modes and thus liberates what Spencer calls “animal subjectivity,” allowing for its full-throated expression. A key agent of this generic transformation lies, for Spencer, in the proliferation of sympathy and sentiment in the late eighteenth century. A deeper engagement with sentimental literature’s formal properties could have enabled an exploration of the possibility that it is precisely the alienating estrangements of sentimental form that allow us to approach the limits of humanitarian sensibility and human-centered ethics, as Festa has argued, as well as call into question their consequences for our relationship to non-human animals.
An early chapter on “Making an Ass of Yourself in Narrative” is perhaps, not coincidentally, where Spencer comes closest to thinking seriously about the burden of literary form in the constitution of the human-animal relation. In a discussion of eighteenth-century interpretations of the biblical story of Balaam’s ass, Spencer observes that the “absurdity of the ass, we could say, haunted all literary representation of animal language” (63). The focus on the ways in which literary form at its most “absurd” unsettles the relationship between human and ass gives way in subsequent chapters to an argument about how greater naturalism in representation leads to a more ethical treatment of non-human animals. In an otherwise illuminating chapter on animals in children’s literature, for instance, rather than draw into relief the function of literary animals in the constitution of the emergent category of human children, the emphasis falls instead on how children’s literature is where we see “a new literature of animals” (10) shaped by the message of anti-cruelty coming into view, despite the fact that children’s literature (not to mention childhood) is itself nothing if not utterly “new” in the late eighteenth century. And if more naturalism means more humanity to non-human animals, the same cannot be said, unfortunately, about some of the human animals that form the basis of later chapters on women (“Woman and Brute in Feminism”), the disenfranchised poor (“Learned Pigs”), and, most especially, enslaved people from the African continent (“The Orang-Outang System”). Ultimately, more attention throughout the book to what literary form offers by way of estranging both human and non-human animal life (to avoid some of the reflexive naturalizations to which the argument succumbs) would have allowed this text more fully to take account of the impossibility, finally, of taking account.

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Godless Fictions in the Eighteenth Century: A Literary History of Atheism by James Bryant Reeves
Review by Misty G. Anderson, University of Tennessee

James Bryant Reeves sketches a literary history of atheism that argues the paradox of atheism’s imaginative function: to keep people from becoming atheists in the real world. His research reveals that “although real atheists are hard to locate in the eighteenth century ... imaginary atheists are not” (5). Atheism plays an important role as an affect that shapes thought in the long eighteenth century. Reeves’s study traces the considerable imaginative force it wielded in the formation of modern British subjectivity. In Godless Fictions, doctrine, denomination, and theology matter, but they are part of a dynamic conversation about fictionality, sociability, and belief. Reeves argues that eighteenth-century fictions (novelistic or, more broadly, as story) allow for an experimental abandonment of the self to another, risk-free, and that atheism stands in for the spectre of what kinds of affects reintroduce risk into the equation. Fictional experiments with atheists play an especially important role in mapping out the modern fragility of belief as necessarily shaped by the possibility of its own error.

Reeves traces the ripples of the Reformation as the trauma that fractured Britons (the majority of whom still largely agreed on the basic truth of Christianity) into denominations, alongside a growing experience of religious diversity that was augmented by empire and its migratory flows. The subsequent ecumenism, toleration, and soft cosmopolitanism that empire’s projects deployed included the use of atheism as a kind of conceptual sheepdog to round up the British herd. Atheism’s imaginative threat helped to define the nation against not “other” belief, but unbelief. The project, then, was to encourage a “belief in unbelief” in order to make readers sceptical about atheism. Atheism is, in this analysis, a management strategy at work in the multiple modernities of the eighteenth century, which Reeves, with Rita Felski, sees as “mobile and shifting” (19). Writers, especially satirists, used atheism as the antithesis of whatever was just or true in a rapidly changing cultural landscape. Atheism is in this account a problem of “bad feelings,” especially selfishness, and the threat they present to the social order rather than one of confessional orthodoxy. Consistently mapping these “bad feelings” onto atheism was a large-scale literary phenomenon to manage modernity’s affective confusion. While Reeves is too judicious to make grand claims for the persistence of this strategy, readers may nonetheless find through lines to the present.
Reeves shows us the structuring function of this imaginary atheism as it intertwined with emerging conceptions of gender, nation, capital, sociability, orientalism, and empire. Reeves organizes his own argument around work by Swift, Pope, Fielding, Gibbes, Cowper, and Shelley to paint this literary history of atheism that upends any simplified secularization thesis about the period or its prize genre, the novel, while also avoiding the trap of trying to establish authorial confessional identity. By situating, for instance, Swift’s ironic accounts of the rise of unbelief in the context of the function of unbelief, Reeves moves beyond the “critical stalemate” of Swift as orthodox Christian (Harth) or Swift as materialist (Ellenzweig), which presumes an unlikely confessional orthodoxy on the part of any author. Instead, Reeves turns to the literariness of the response to atheism in Swift and Pope rather than pursue the intentional fallacy guessing game about Swift’s doctrinal position.

The consequences of his argument for “ecumenical self-fashioning” (75) in a significant body of eighteenth-century fiction lead him to reconsider dominant theories of the novel. The Sarah Fielding chapter, for instance, opens with an assessment of the Lukács-Watt-McKeon-Gallagher critical lineage of the novel as limited by its insistence on fiction’s procedures of unbelief, which bakes the secularization thesis into these critical narratives of the rise of the novel (and determines which novels get to “rise”). Reeves gives us another way to accommodate novels outside the realist tradition as well as Sarah Fielding’s counterintuitive scepticism about unbelief, which structures *David Simple* (1744): “the commonplace association made among theism, sympathy and sociability” we find in Fielding depends on imagining a London “overrun with self-interest, avarice, and human suffering” in order to inculcate scepticism about unbelief (110).

Reeves clears the space for this argument in the reassessment of Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* (2007) in his introduction. While Reeves grants the power of Taylor’s understanding of belief and unbelief as kinds of lived experiences (rather than rival theories), and thus as affectively descriptive within a capacious notion of modernity, he faults Taylor for an overreliance in his own narrative on eighteenth-century thinkers who cognitively reject God’s existence, the “speculative atheism” of Hobbes and Hume, and on a dry, unfeeling Anglicanism, bereft of spiritual feeling. Reeves punctures this narrative by pointing out that it is Taylor himself who eschews eighteenth-century literature for philosophy and, as a result, reproduces a calculating, rational, orderly Enlightenment mind to prop up his thesis, while indulging in literary examples aplenty once he gets to Romanticism, where Wordsworth and Goethe, followed by Pound, Dostoyevsky, and others, bear the standard
of feeling for the age. Reeves calls out Taylor for stacking the deck, then plays his own hand expertly. Reframing Taylor’s argument about lived experience through eighteenth-century fiction tells a very different story indeed, a story in which atheism still plays a central role, but as a name for the absence of feeling that makes (most) Britons feel better about themselves for not going so far in their critical independence of thought as unbelief.

*Godless Fictions* is a powerful intervention in an ongoing conversation about the role of belief and wonder in the long eighteenth century, a conversation that includes Colin Jager, Sarah Tindal Kareem, Lori Branch, Wolfram Schmidgen, and others who question the presumption of the period’s emergent secularity. It also makes clear that the relationship of sensibility to secularized belief is part of the road map of empire and global capital, which can translate out its own “ugly feelings,” especially selfishness and greed, as atheism, a perversion of a properly British ecumenism, without ever being held to account for the predations of capital and empire.

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Théâtre et charlatans dans l’Europe moderne, dir. Beya Dhraïef, Éric Négrel et Jennifer Ruimi
Critique littéraire par Bénédicte Prot


La relation étroitement et durablement tissée entre charlatanisme et théâtralité s’éclaire à la lecture du volume collectif *Théâtre et charlatans*
**Critiques**


Cette ample « archéologie du charlatan » (356) comprend de nombreuses contributions consacrées au XVIIIᵉ siècle, suivant une variété d’approches. Des analyses transversales bâties à partir de corpus textuels et/ou de sources iconographiques côtoient des études de cas portant sur un auteur dramatique, une pièce ou un personnage fictif inspiré d’une figure réelle. Les apports sont donc multiples pour le champ des études dix-huitiémistes.

Au XVIIIᵉ siècle, ce double du médecin qu’est le charlatan demeure le proche cousin du comédien et s’épanouit toujours dans l’univers de la spectaculaire. Les techniques de ventes des empiriques déployées avec force mise en scène l’attestent (Baron, 37-50). En témoigne également le cas de Buonafede Vitali, médecin-chirurgien de son état, vendeur ambulant, homme de théâtre contemporain de Goldoni et défenseur *pro domo* d’une identité multiple (Jori, 239–52). La faconde de certains bonimenteurs du XVIIIᵉ siècle est louée par des historiens du théâtre du XIXᵉ siècle qui entendent ainsi donner ses lettres de noblesse au spectacle populaire (Curel, 85–94).

esthétique (Ruimi, 175–83). Ils envahissent le répertoire théâtral du XVIIIᵉ siècle, ainsi que l’indiquent *Le Charlatan, ou le docteur Sacroton* (1780), pièce charnière dans l’œuvre de Louis-Sébastien Mercier (De Rougemont, 185–93), et *L’Empirique* (1743), parodie du *Mahomet* de Voltaire par Charles-Simon Favart (Mele, 163–72). Dans *L’Époux par supercherie* (1744) de Louis de Boissy, la figure du faux médecin fait place à celle d’un inquiétant abuseur qui s’insinue dans l’intimité des cercles privés et met à mal l’authenticité des sentiments amoureux et des liens conjugaux (Bénac-Giroux, 327–37).

Par ailleurs, les comédies de Goethe, Natale Roviglio et Catherine II de Russie mettent en scène le comte de Cagliostro mais échouent à faire de ce dupeur à la mode un type satirique (Leterrier, 227–36). Non moins fameux, Casanova déploie tout un éventail de supercheries allant de la guérison à la prédiction: il incarne un art total de la mise en scène de soi-même sur le théâtre du monde et dans une société où coexistent lumières de la raison et croyances occultes (Rothé, 253–62). Acteur des controverses médicales, le médecin anglais John Woodward fait quant à lui l’objet de pamphlets et de comédies satiriques qui le font basculer du côté du charlatanisme, et remettent en cause son statut officiel et son identité professionnelle (Vasset, 199–212).


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«[O]ntologiquement théâtrale» (19), la figure du charlatan au XVIIIe siècle ne cesse de se démultiplier et offre des déclinaisons du motif de l'imposture. À ce titre, l’*Encyclopédie* définit le charlatan comme celui qui fait illégitimement valoir un statut, un savoir et une pratique spécifiquement dans le domaine de la médecine ([1753], 3:208a–210a), mais elle envoie également à une acception générale de la charlatanerie comme tromperie: «C’est proprement une hypocrisie de talents ou d’état», affirme Diderot (3:210a). L’absence de diplôme médical confère *de facto* le titre de charlatan, distinction faussement honorifique que l’encyclopédiste octroie à bien d’autres (dis)simulateurs, à commencer par les pédants. Dans la foulée, Voltaire s’attaque à ceux qu’il considère comme les imposteurs des sciences et des lettres: compilateurs et traducteurs à la solde des marchands-libraires sont à la littérature ce que les charlatans sont à la médecine (dans *Questions sur l’Encyclopédie*, Œuvres complètes, t. 40 [Voltaire Foundation, 2009], 36–42). C’est à partir d’un acteur (au sens littéral) du monde médical que Voltaire disqualifie l’ouvrage de commande et les plumes mercenaires, et interroge ainsi la condition d’auteur. C’est l’un des intérêts de *Théâtre et charlatans dans l’Europe moderne* que de nous convier à l’étude de ces figures de l’imposture qui catalysent les rapports entre théâtre et médecine et participent des interactions fécondes entre médecine et littérature au XVIIIe siècle.

**Bénédicte Prot** a réalisé aux universités de Lorraine (France) et de Fribourg (Suisse) une thèse de doctorat ès lettres sur les représentations de la nudité dans la littérature, les arts et la médecine en France au XVIIIe siècle (2017). Elle consacre ses recherches postdoctorales aux rapports entre littérature et médecine à cette époque.
Counterfactual Romanticism, ed. Damian Walford Davies
Review by Alex Wetmore, University of the Fraser Valley

Walter Benjamin describes his much-discussed “angel of history,” inspired by Paul Klee’s Angelus Novus (1920), with a “face turned toward the past” witnessing the “chain of events” as a “single catastrophe which piles wreckage upon wreckage” at his feet (Illuminations [1968], 257–58). Literary and cultural historians are familiar with the feeling of grappling with fragments from this “pile of debris” and imagining (however fleetingly) how this or that might have been different. Might this impulse to imagine alternatives to the way things have unfolded, like recent productive work around imagined futurities, be mobilized to worthwhile ends?

Damian Walford Davies, editor of Counterfactual Romanticism, responds to questions like these by envisioning an opposing (or perhaps supplemental) figure to Benjamin’s: the “Counterfactual Angel,” inspired by William Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793), who points to spots on the historical record that “remain conditioned and shadowed by what did not come to pass,” and are thus haunted by the spectral residue of “what ifs, might-have-beens and but fors” (4–5). At its most ambitious, this book embraces the transformative-transgressive spirit of this angel as the avant-garde of a proposed “counterfactual turn” in Romantic studies, introducing a variety of interventions from an impressive list of contributors, collectively illustrating this turn’s potential to yield productive avenues and methods of inquiry. At the same time, occasional passing allusions to “fake news,” “alternative facts,” and white supremacist conspiracy theories betray some background anxiety around the need, as well, to square this potential with recent and urgent examples of dangerous and pernicious mobilizations of the counterfactual in public discourse. Ultimately, these recent circumstances can be seen, I think, to reaffirm a need for the kind of deeper critical reflection this collection models and encourages; but even setting the current kairotic rhetorical conditions aside, the category of the “counterfactual” raises questions and issues of more long-standing scholarly interest.

Catherine Gallagher and Mark Salber Phillips have recently highlighted the cultural significance and influence of counterfactual thinking, what Gallagher defines in Telling It Like It Wasn’t (2018) as “a certain kind of historical speculation” premised on a “past-tense, hypothetical, conditional conjecture” that is “known to be contrary to fact” (2). Thought experiments have long been a part of many disciplines, from military history to economics and philosophy, and alternative
pasts, divergent timelines, and secret histories also have a rich literary
tradition. Yet a complete genealogy of the modern “counterfactual
imagination” remains to be fully traced. These essays can be seen, in this
context, as mapping the psychogeography of the specifically Romantic
counterfactual imaginary, and doing so using a mixture of three broad
approaches: theorizing counterfactualism (discussing the Romantic era
in terms of what it might reveal about the counterfactual as a critical-
theoretical concept); historicizing counterfactualism (situating examples
of Romantic counterfactual thinking and writing within historical-
cultural contexts); and, most provocatively, doing counterfactualism
(positing “what if” scenarios about the Romantic era, and then explor-
ing their potential consequences and significance).

On the first front, for example, Anne McCarthy’s “The Object as in
Itself It Really Is Not,” discusses a range of Romantic texts and authors
and, through them, considers the counterfactual’s potential to “recast
the present and the future as sites of radical possibility” and critically
examine “the relationship between identity and contingency” (33).
Tilottama Rajan’s illuminating analysis of Sophia Lee’s The Recess (1783)
situates the text within broader analyses of the history of women’s
writing, while “ultimately” aiming to “reflect on the epistemology of
the counterfactual as something more elusive and dynamic than simply
a possible world” (108). Illustrating the second approach, Angela
Esterhammer situates Romantic manifestations of counterfactual
thinking within particular economic and cultural conditions that set
the stage for a sudden flourishing of plots involving alternate histories
in novels of the 1820s, while Mary-Ann Constantine explores the
links between the emerging modern counterfactual imagination in
the Romantic age and the dissemination of counterfeit textual relics,
forgeries, and faux-authentic bardic epics. These are each illuminating
and valuable studies, but what will be most striking for readers, I suspect,
is those essays that actually perform counterfactual speculation. Kenneth
R. Johnson pursues a more or less straightforward thought experiment
by considering how Romantic poetry might have looked if Wordsworth
had published The Prelude when it was completed in 1805 rather than
posthumously in 1850. Peter J. Kitson considers how the Romantic
period might have looked if a “Chinese awakening” in British literature
and art, which seemed on the horizon in the late eighteenth century,
had actually occurred, using as a prompt the speculative possibility of
Horace Walpole composing an alternative novel to The Castle of Otranto
set in ancient China. Intriguingly, the most boundary-pushing of
these “creative-critical” experiments is the editor’s own contribution,
featuring as it does a “zombie” Mary Wollstonecraft revived in a literary
“multiverse” and penning a *Frankenstein*-like novel titled *L’Estrange; Or, The Modern Menoetius*, after surviving, in Davies’s imagined alternate reality, a difficult birth, while her daughter (and future author of *Frankenstein*) dies in infancy. The essay provides a vivid illustration of the wide range of cross-disciplinary critical potentialities opened up by such approaches, linking as it does literature, Irish politics, gender studies, and medicine. It also frames itself as a “provocation” troubling disciplinary and “epistemological pieties” (188), and thus also reveals (partly by design) the similarly wide range of ethical and ideological questions that performing counterfactualism can raise. While some, like this reader, may come away still wondering about the full implications of Davies’s “obstetrical” intervention on the lives and literary legacies of Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley, it can be seen as an invitation for further discussion and debate.

The outcome of these future discussions aside, eighteenth-century specialists should find plenty of interest in the collection as a whole, including Gary Kelly’s tracking of the onset of modernity through the print market relations of fraud, forgery, and popular historiography across the 1700s, and Manushag Powell’s engaging recovery of the anarchist pirate utopia of Libertalia, which focuses as much on the 1720s as on later Romantic pirate narrative adaptations. Powell’s essay also may serve to inspire further study, remarking that “counterfactual writing” has recently “generated excitement in nineteenth-century studies” while “its place, if any, in the eighteenth century remains mostly unexplored” (264). Overall, there are a number of truly intriguing and insightful essays, and the latitude afforded for “creative-critical” approaches also allows critics to play with form and convention in ways that are valuable yet often excluded in scholarly work, as illustrated by Judith Thompson’s chapter on John Thelwall, which blends personal experiences of ghostly apparitions, speculation, metafiction, and rigorous archival research in a manner she notes will have little place in her forthcoming scholarly biography. The net result is a fascinating, provocative, and suitably eclectic collection that raises productive questions for eighteenth-century specialists, including questions about the ethical and theoretical implications of counterfactual methodology as a new horizon for critical practice in the study of fiction and its contexts.

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Narrative Mourning: Death and Its Relics in the Eighteenth-Century British Novel by Kathleen M. Oliver
Review by Kelly McGuire, Trent University

Working within the intellectual tradition of Philippe Ariès’s *The Hour of Our Death*, *Narrative Mourning* traces the implications of the “disappearance of death” in the eighteenth century. Kathleen M. Oliver argues that in thrusting the dead body and death itself to the margins of consciousness, people in the period created the conditions for a culture of mourning that invested heightened importance in the relics and “relicts” of the dead. As such, this book belongs to a resurgence of interest in death and materiality as it relates to the eighteenth-century British novel and emergent ideas of consciousness theorized by John Locke.

Loss resides at the heart of this book, specifically the cultural loss sustained in the face of shifting attitudes toward death in the early modern period. Oliver argues that these losses are multiple, encompassing a sense of selfhood, community (in an intergenerational sense), and communion (7). In this sense, the relic has a compensatory function, existing at the level of metaphor to suggest the persistence of mourning in the culture of the period that also, as Oliver persuasively demonstrates, inevitably seeps into narrative.

The tripartite structure of the book organized around the subjects of “Objects,” “Persons,” and “Ghosts” allows the author to transcend chronology to create unlikely but generative couplings like Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* and Anne Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in part 1. Placing these texts in proximity with each other enables Oliver to trace the evolution of the “relic” from an extension of the dead in Richardson’s novel to a “highly animated” object imbued with consciousness in the gothic novel. The first chapter invokes *Clarissa* as a transitional text, showing us, through an in-depth reading of complex bequests of mourning jewellery and portraiture, how Richardson’s novel is situated between an older understanding of the relic as sacred and an emergent secular view. Although previous studies on death have thoroughly mined this novel, Oliver’s contribution, hinging on the idea of “beneficent contagion” that allows for Clarissa’s spirit to continue affecting those to whom she imparts her final gifts, is vital to establishing the bridging function of the text for the ensuing discussion.

The second section on “Persons” sustains a discussion of *David Simple* and *Volume the Last* and *The History of Charles Grandison*, which
establishes a striking contrast between how persons left behind as “relics” (widows, widowers, orphans, family members, and, in the case of Sarah Fielding’s work, friends) are treated in these works. Oliver’s chapter on *Grandison* contributes something new in its reading of Clementina della Porretta as a “relict” of Grandison, exemplifying death in the figure of a “madwoman.” Accounting for the shadow Clementina casts over the narrative, Oliver compellingly argues that Richardson’s second novel is haunted by a Lockean consciousness which opens up an idea of mourning beyond death and into the realm of narrative. In contrast, the reading of allegory in the melancholic *David Simple* novels suggests a refusal of consolation in the promise of heavenly redemption or a “free-floating” Lockean consciousness, positioning death as a decidedly non-Richardsonian form of oblivion.

In the third part on “Ghosts,” *The Man of Feeling* appropriately receives its own section, for the discussion here is extensive, richly detailed, and goes far toward making sense of this difficult novel. Strikingly placing the text in the category of “it-narratives” popular in the period, Oliver argues that Harley circulates through society as an object without agency, whose accidental encounters reveal a chasm between people imbued with sensibility as almost spectral beings and those who inhabit a material world disconnected from death. Drawing on the tradition of death-writing as a collaboration between the mourner and the deceased, Oliver reads the ghostly narrator of *The Man of Feeling* as both a kind of mediating spirit and an embodiment of Lockean consciousness, while positioning sensibility itself as a discourse intimately bound up with death.

Although an idea of a Lockean consciousness haunts this text, a direct engagement with Locke’s work is not as extensive as one might expect, and is confined largely to the book’s introduction. Adam Smith’s invocation of death in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) makes an appearance in the conclusion, but an engagement with the text as well as with other philosophical works would help develop and complicate the idea of the Lockean consciousness that is so central to Oliver’s thesis. That said, this work sustains an engagement with theory—specifically in its treatment of mourning and melancholia—that elegantly grapples with the guiding question of the book: “Why did our eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ancestors respond to the disappearance of death with an increase in mourning?” (7). Those who are interested in looking beyond elegy and the poetic tradition for answers to this question will find much to satisfy them in Oliver’s discussion of novels of sensibility and gothic narratives. Finally, students and those who are unfamiliar
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with some of the novels Oliver discusses will welcome her clearly marked conclusions that eloquently and often lyrically summarize the concerns of each chapter and section while signposting the more difficult arguments in the interest of accessibility.

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“La Henriade” de Voltaire: Poésie, histoire, mémoire, ed. Daniel Maira and Jean-Marie Roulin

Review by James Fowler, King’s College London

The introduction to this collection reminds readers that to study La Henriade requires engagement not only with the poem but also with a complex, evolving paratext, composed of prefaces (by Voltaire and others), notes, remarques, and related writings in other genres. So industriously did Voltaire modify the paratext that the sixty or so versions published during his lifetime became a veritable “chantier editorial” (12). Nor would the process cease with the author’s death, as this collection effectively demonstrates. The first part shows Voltaire rethinking the relation between history and fiction even as he engages with other writers’ theorizations of the epic genre. Christophe Martin meticulously analyzes Voltaire’s attempt to compose—and to promote—the great epic which France had so far failed to produce. For the Essay on Epic Poetry and the Essay on the Civil Wars of France, both of which Voltaire penned in England, seem designed to prepare the way for his own poem to be favourably received there. Martin also reminds us that in 1733 the author incorporated a French version of the Essay on Epic Poetry into editions of La Henriade. In the context of a renewed Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, Batteux and others did not fail to interpret the Essay’s presence in the paratext as a form of self-promotion. Martin argues that this is too harsh a reading. For Voltaire’s thesis that an epic poet should adopt a clear dramatic scheme, deploy moral allegories, and convey a philosophical message constituted a timely rationalization of the genre whose scope exceeded personal ambition (25–41). Christelle Bahier-Porte explores in greater detail the context provided by the Querelle. She focuses on Voltaire’s insistence that a modern French epic should be able to “remuer le cœur des lecteurs” (44). In other words, intérêt should be given free rein—a decision that connects La Henriade to developments in other genres: novel, opera, and tragédie pathétique (55–57). Pierino Gallo analyzes the role of various prefaces (by Voltaire, Marmontel, or Frederick the Great) in linking the poem to
new social and cultural contexts (59–75), and Myrtille Mérimac-Bourdét examines Voltaire’s tendency to subordinate the historical to the poetic, on the grounds that fable can help to “faire sentir [la vérité]” (81). The first part closes with Daniel Maira’s appraisal of Voltaire’s notes, which Maira views as a space in which epic norms and values are subverted so that civil war, the corruption of “les grands,” and the politics of the Church can be viewed in a critical perspective (93–107).

The second part of the collection places greater emphasis on close reading, applied to the text’s rhetorical, structural, and thematic aspects. Jean-Marie Roulin argues that, while epics written since Antiquity, such as Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, had remained faithful to the Aristotelian notion of fiction as “ornement, embellissement, agrandissement,” Voltaire recasts fiction as part of a “cognitive procedure” (111–24). An example is the hero’s visit to England (a historical invention that Voltaire justifies by appealing to vraisemblance). Unlike ancient precedents in Homer or Virgil, Roulin argues, Voltaire’s “story within a story” is related to the present of telling, so that it forms part of the future king of France’s maturing into statecraft (115–16); this, in turn, offers readers a model for the enlightened pursuit of knowledge. Roulin’s piece resonates effectively with subsequent chapters by Claudia Nickel (125–38) and Cerstin Bauer-Funke (153–66) that touch on the hero’s education in *La Henriade*. In his discussion of Voltaire’s images of horror, Gianni Iotti observes that as French poetry, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, fostered the use of stock figures and motifs, the epic genre reflected aristocratic values such as the praiseworthiness of martial valour. Iotti shows how Voltaire, nevertheless, presents the horrors of war and religious fanaticism from the point of view of the victim, and does so in ways that differ from precedents including Virgil and Lucan. Voltaire thus manages to inflect an “aristocratic” genre so that it becomes a vehicle for his own, “bourgeois” ethos, in which violence is presented as inherently regressive (167–79).

The third part examines the text’s diffusion after the author’s death. Contributors engage with themes spanning politics, pedagogy, belles-lettres, positivism, literary history, and a new interest in France’s medieval past. Linda Gil explores how Condorcet’s part in editing the Kehl edition allowed him to adjust Voltaire’s perspective when it struck him as insufficiently critical, for instance concerning Colbert (183–201). Stéphane Zekian charts ways in which the poem’s reputation was buffeted by complex forces throughout the century (233–48). In 1823, one fashionable critic felt justified in describing *La Henriade* as “un ouvrage estimé généralement, et qui est dans les mains de tous les Français” (233); and under the Restoration it met with the approval of monarchists.
But from the late 1830s, the patriotically inclined could transfer their allegiance to the medieval *Chanson de Roland*, in an accessible, published form, and hailed by Banville as “notre véritable épopée nationale” (238). Under the Third Republic, enthusiasm for medieval culture waned, but even would-be heirs of the Enlightenment saw the poem as difficult to defend. At best, it was argued that the poem illuminated the history of taste, and offered nuggets of anecdote via the notes. Zekian’s insights into the poem’s reception are nicely complemented by those of Jean-Paul Sermain (203–16), Marc Hersant (217–31), and Martine Jey (249–64). For instance, Jey demonstrates how, with the evolution of educational policy and the help of literary critics such as Nisard and Lanson, *La Henriade* fell afoul of an emergent “absolu littéraire” (264) that had rejected belles-lettres by the end of the nineteenth century—a stark contrast to the situation in 1802, when Voltaire’s poem had entered the “corpus fermé des classiques français” (249), in the sense of works to be taught in the new Napoleonic lycées. The last chapter, by Lisa Kemper and Maira, offers an interesting discussion of nineteenth-century German translations of the poem (265–86). Overall, this collection is a valuable and scholarly addition to Voltaire criticism.

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*Romantic Literature and the Colonised World: Lessons from Indigenous Translations* by Nikki Hessell

Review by Daniel DeWispelare, George Washington University

*Romanic Literature and the Colonised World* pinpoints new ways of studying Romantic-era literature by tracing Indigenous translations of canonical British writers and by attending to translators’ engagements with canonical anglophone material within their own local contexts. Taking up the lineages of Felicia Hemans, Robert Burns, Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, and John Keats during the period 1850–1939—just as “specifically indigenous print culture[s] were taking hold” (2)—Nikki Hessell documents how British Romantic literature spoke about colonization projects while also opening conversations about how Indigenous print cultures spoke back. The results are two-fold: Hessell confirms the diagnosis that Romantic-era literature was “shot through with notes of colonization” while simultaneously getting into the nitty gritty of how, in specific places, and in forms like the newspaper and popular journal, “indigenous-language translator[s] hear the echoes of
these original notes and draw them out” (5). In Hessell’s hands, Indigenous translations become displacements and continuations of the Romantic impulse rather than its diluted afterlife. Indeed, the author redefines Romanticism as “a unit of literary history, last[ing] well into the twentieth century in indigenous thought and intellectual activity” (6). In diverse colonized spaces, Indigenous translators reformulate and extend Romantic preoccupations in analogical ways. What is more, their engagements “can send us back to the original moments of composition, and the original English texts, with a new appreciation for their subtlety” (8).

Roughly seventy-five years ago, René Wellek famously posited tropological unities among European Romantic texts. Hessell does something similar with “trans-indigenous” (12) colonial writings and translations, but her methodological challenges are more complex and her conclusions are justifiably narrower. For one, Hessell faces head on the methodological question of translation itself. Because the study of any translation requires familiarity with a source language, a target language, and the historical intermingling of both, demands on the researcher are intensified. As the acknowledgments and introduction point out, Hessell’s management of these three intersecting dimensions led to rich collaborative work with scholars in New Zealand, Hawaii, and India—the kinds of collaboration that all literary study should demand. So, even though the author does not “aim for this book to be a contribution to the field of translation studies” (8), it should well be counted as such, especially for the humility that Hessell models when drawing conclusions about languages and cultures she knows only as an outsider.

Beyond translation studies, Romantic Literature and the Colonised World makes useful contributions to studies of cultural transmission surrounding the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Highlighting maritime spaces that have only recently drawn the attention of critics of Romanticism, with some variations the book proceeds roughly chronologically, both in terms of original author and Indigenous translator. Moreover, the author always has an eye toward printing and circulation technologies in each space, facts that will intrigue the print historian. Framed by an introduction and conclusion, case studies of Hemans and Burns as translated into the Māori context of Aotearoa New Zealand and then Scott as translated into Hawaiian make up the first half of the book (chapters 2–4), while Malayalam translations of Wordsworth and Keats make up the second half (chapters 5–7). An expert in any one of these languages and literatures—Māori, Hawaiian, Malayalam—may experience a flattening effect when these diverse contexts are yoked together in the service of an argument about British
anglophone literature, but the nuance of the close readings make up for this charge.

Hessell’s readings of Māori translations of Felicia Hemans, for example, try to account for the transimperial popularity of this ambivalent figure within the context of the recent colonization of Aotearoa New Zealand. Even though Hemans’s veneration of the colonial project can make for “uncomfortable reading” (26) in the twenty-first century, Hessell draws out ways that, across her oeuvre, “Hemans’s notions of home, nation, and the costs of conflict for women are subtly refracted back [in translation] as examples of Māori notions, infused with the literary and linguistic practices of the Māori language, and reflective of entirely different but nevertheless related concerns” (28). In Hessell’s account, Hemans’s Māori readers would have identified with the “deep wound” (40) of the destruction of the home and its symbolic potential given their experience of post-colonization. In other instances, such as her reading of Māori translations of Burns’s “A Song—Thou Lingering Star,” Hessell points out that Kōhere, the translator, modifies and regenders the mournful language of the poem to fit within the context of Māori funerary rites, which are typically staged by women (65).

The many translations discussed in the book, then, both refract and diffract the content of their source texts. Hessell’s charge is that scholars should figure out how to better label the effects of translation in British and non-British literatures. How, for example, can the Hawaiian translator Kapena render the rich repertoire of feudal titles in Scott’s Ivanhoe into terms that are intelligible to a Hawaiian reader (100)? Or, how, for example, can the Malayalam poet and translator Raman make sense of Wordsworth’s poetry’s prodigious use of place names in a way that would make it relatable to someone who had never travelled out of India, much less to Covent Garden or Tilbury Vale (130–32)? The final chapter on Keats offers up questions like this in an inverted form. Hessell’s reading demonstrates Keats’s use, in “Isabella” and other poems, of āyurvedic medicinal terminologies, themselves the products of colonial translations being imported back into Britain. These and other questions animate this book, but an ideal reader will be able to learn how to pose questions of the same order regarding the array of other linguistic and cultural contexts that intermingle, often hierarchically, under the banner of British Romanticism.

This book will find enthusiastic readers and responses among scholars of British Romanticism, print history, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultural history. Beyond research, teaching one or several of
the case studies alongside the anglophone texts they concern would be a wonderful exercise for any undergraduate classroom. As suggested above too, there is much for translation studies scholars here, even if the book’s reliance on commonplace terms like “literal translation” (15), evacuate some of the technical specificity that translators may desire. By any measure, though, *Romantic Literature and the Colonised World* gathers a host of consequential interventions.

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*Reading Jane Austen after Reading Charlotte Smith*  
by Jacqueline M. Labbe  
Review by Yoon Sun Lee, Wellesley College

The death of the author, though pronounced by Roland Barthes in 1968, has been a long time coming, and this is particularly the case for Jane Austen. Not only does Austen continue to enjoy the status of a celebrity-author, but also her work remains linked to an exceptionalism that views her as utterly special and unique. That view seems remarkably resistant to most efforts to defeat or inflect it by placing her novels within various larger contexts.

Jacqueline M. Labbe’s bold, fresh, and original study aims a powerful blow at Austen exceptionalism, this idea of Austen’s singularity and perfection. Where critics in the age of Barthes had often relied on the metaphor of the text as woven, as textile or texture, Labbe draws on the resources of a thoroughly digital and digitized age. The old idea of intertextuality, of a web of texts, has certainly taken on new and more definite contours in the face of developments like computational literary criticism. *Reading Jane Austen after Reading Charlotte Smith*, however, is definitely not an example of the latter, and could, perhaps, even be thought of as its opposite. Relying on a vernacular familiarity with ideas of codes and templates, Labbe invokes such concepts to offer a fresh account of Austen’s novels: not as productions of the author’s brain, but as emerging from shared cultural, literary, and generic codes and models. Rather than simply dissolve Austen into a broader “open-source environment” (23), Labbe focuses on Austen’s relation to exactly one other writer: Charlotte Smith.

The goal is not so much to take Austen down a notch as to pair her indelibly in our minds with Smith. The argument is that Smith’s novels provide Austen with an indispensable model, which Labbe brilliantly
describes as “template and system and source and flow” (24). Smith’s novel *Emmeline* (1788), in particular, “supplies models which Austen plunders (commons-like, codex-like, nostalgia-like) ... wholesale and in subdivisions” (25). This quotation gives an idea of the theoretical reach and ambition of Labbe’s argument. But theories are handled lightly and deftly here; instead of weighing down the book, they feel like the bubbles in champagne.

Labbe shows us an Austen who is an “active user” of Smith’s “template” or “source-code” (27–28), which is described as follows, in *Emmeline*:

“‘There is a child. There is a castle. There is a scandal ... There is a woman ... There is a man ... There is a story that is told again and again ... It is about a woman and a man and another man; and to one side a woman and a man and another man ... In the background ... a castle, a history, some law, some wrongdoing’” (19–20). In Labbe’s account, Austen divides and disposes of elements of Smith’s plots and characters throughout her own novels, relying on Smith’s powerful social criticism to build out the less visible but still important sides of her fictions. Labbe shows how both novelists explore social control and systems of power as exercised through observation, internalized in manners, and internalized more destructively as sensibility and a devotion to suffering.

The goals of this ambitious book are many. One is to revive interest in Smith’s novels, which deserve greater readership and critical attention. Equally important is to offer a new model for thinking about literary influence. Instead of thinking of influence hierarchically, in terms of indebtedness or belatedness, Labbe invites us to think about “junctions” and “mutuality” (3), authorship as a deployment of shared codes and models. I was struck by the echoes of structuralist criticism, even of Russian formalist criticism, as in the account above of the *Emmeline* “template.” Labbe’s argument derives much of its power from its ability to abstract. For example, she offers a list of the plots that can be found in this one Smith novel-template: “the love-plot, the sex-plot, the risk-plot, the entanglement-plot, the gossip-plot ... the law-plot, the inheritance- and property-plot, and the sensibility-plot” (27).

But where Barthes, for instance, emphasizes the infinite nature of intertextuality—the codes keep going, the text keeps expanding before our eyes as we trace these connections—Labbe does something strikingly different: she wants us to focus on just these two authors, Austen and Smith, whom she depicts as co-writers, linked as in a companionate marriage, though their careers were not contemporary. We could describe this book as itself offering a template for a new way of thinking about literary relationality. In that sense, it struck me as
a useful updating of early works of feminist criticism, and as closer to work like Sharon Marcus’s *Between Women* (2007).

Labbe’s enthusiasm, admiration, and love for Smith are infectious. She ends the book with a claim and a cheeky dare to the reader: “Austen is fuller and Smith more resonant when read in the context of each other: a matched pair, complete together, imperfect apart. Go on, test it out—I dare you” (123). As someone who has not yet read all of Smith’s novels, I joyfully accept this challenge. Labbe’s argument also persuaded me anew of the important, though far from uniform, role played by generic codes in the uneven canonization of the novel in the early nineteenth century. Reading these two novelists together provides a clearer sense of how effectively Austen’s novels make use of negative space. But it is time to move on from a sense of Austen’s unique perfection, as Labbe’s book demonstrates powerfully.

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