

sense of romanticism is how different the concept of the "spirit of the age" looks after he has unwrapped the components of romantic historicism. Hazlitt's idea is no longer a generalized and amorphously construed atmospheric of the period. Chandler does an excellent job of opening up the category, showing how Hazlitt used the notion in a complex and often contradictory way, which made satirical play of the very concept it defined. Hazlitt's concept offers a version of the skeptical historicism that is mirrored in our own practices.

While the burden of Chandler's book is, I believe, methodological and polemical, the study also contains excellent readings and interpretations of a set of literary texts, including ones by Scott, Byron, Keats, and Washington Irving. The material on Scott is fascinating, particularly insofar as it makes a clearer place for Scott within the habits of romanticism. But in his use of Scott, as with all the examples, the case is always anomalous, distinct, and in need of consideration *sui generis* in order to be invoked as part of the "spirit of the age" at all. I think the best part of the second half of the study is Chandler's discussion of the imaginative relations between England and America in this period. This is one of the first coherent contributions from within romantic studies to the developing field of "Atlanticist" scholarship. Chandler's discussion of Washington Irving is very powerful, and it suggests new ways forward for romantic pedagogy and research.

This is a brilliant but difficult book. Within the overarching argument there are many episodes which cast a dialectical light upon that argument: within the readings of individual texts, new problems are opened which can be somewhat tangential to the main thesis; and it is sometimes hard to tell what kind of judgments Chandler wishes us to make. But I think it is probably right to say that finally, in Chandler's view, Shelley trumps both Hazlitt and Scott, and the "phantom" of the future represents romantic enthusiasm, rather than irony or nostalgia.

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Terence Allan Hoagwood. *Politics, Philosophy, and the Production of Romantic Texts*. De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996. Pp. 222.
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The wealth of research and critical writing on the 1790s over the past fifteen years or so has done much to change our conception of romanticism. Gone are the days when New Critical reading yielded to phenomenological approaches, soon to be superseded by psychoanalytic

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deconstructionist accounts of a still remarkably uniform canon of (preponderantly lyric) poetry. Today, these conceptions of “high romantic argument” appear rather hermetic, if not obsolete; and the successive imprisonment of romanticism’s cultural significance within such confining notions as “aesthetic autonomy,” “apocalyptic self-consciousness,” or “aporetic figuration” seems little more than a fading institutional memory. In their place the last decade has witnessed the resurgence of a new, quasi-revolutionary enthusiasm that by now claims to have liberated romanticism from its own ideological obfuscations, and “us” from the period’s epiphenomenal disciplinary entailments—namely, the idea of literary study as a strictly formal-aesthetic pursuit. Still, it may be important to ask how the new, expansive contextualist and/or interdisciplinary approaches relate to these earlier methodological shifts. For only so can we hope to comprehend the motives behind this remarkable transformation of romantic studies into a multi-disciplinary endeavor involving political science, law, economics, musicology, as well as gender-, sexuality- and performance-theory. Was it simply desire for more material, a desire to expand our discipline’s portfolio? A recent discussion (at the 1997 NASSR meeting at McMaster University) of the allegedly imperiled state of romanticism in the academy (see the position papers at <http://www.inform.umd.edu/RC/pages/cex/features/crisis.html>) aptly illustrates how intellectual uncertainty tends to stimulate the territorial imagination. Not surprisingly, there are the usual pleas for retrenchment because “we are particularly vulnerable to losing our authority as conservators of the cultural capital traditionally invested in the notion of aesthetic pleasure” (Rzepka, Lau); yet there is also the “unabashed” clarion call for the field’s chronological expansion into what would be a “Romantic Century, 1750–1850” (Galperin & Wolfson).

Given that struggles over the boundaries of a discipline are by definition concerned with strictly “virtual” or imaginary estates, we may have reason to consider the persistent territorial metaphor in the current debate over romanticism to be itself something of a *displacement*. To retain the metaphor a moment longer, the ongoing, horizontal expansion of romantic studies appears to be that of an “open-field” economy whose ethos of inclusion, like the eponymous mode of husbandry, is at once democratic and archaic. Unlike more acutely “disciplinary” approaches, that is, the current climate of romantic studies reflects a noticeable disenchantment with comparatively more precise methodological and theoretical concerns that, until the mid-eighties, had defined “reading” an admittedly restrictive canonical body of romantic poetry. By contrast (at least as far as anyone can tell), ours is the age of professionalism and *divide et impera*, a time of intensely specialized and forever self-dividing scholarly enterprises that live essentially parallel lives, happily afloat between the 1790s revolutionary

dream of Jacobin *égalité* and a somewhat less ennobling bourgeois *indifférence* that writers from Theodor Adorno to David Simpson have identified as symptomatic of the academic postmodern. The result, it seems, is an institutional work-ethic that appears less analytical than transactional, less driven by cognitive ambition than by professional self-interest. We keep the business of romanticism up simply by keeping up with business, which in our case involves periodically reinventing the discipline and, in so doing, transferentially recreating ourselves.

It would be unfair to Terence Hoagwood's study to burden it with this (or any other) account of the field of romantic studies *as a whole*, were it not for the fact that *Politics, Philosophy, and the Production of Romantic Texts* so pointedly disavows most critical methods and so emphatically (if somewhat quizzically) repudiates what it calls "conceptual" criticism. The book is organized in two parts. The first explores the relation between historical and hermeneutic structures in the context of British romanticism, while the second takes up four individual books, *Blake's Book[s] of Urizen*, Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice*, the poetry of Charlotte Turner Smith, and John Murray's co-publication of Byron's *Lara* and Rogers' *Jacqueline*. At the risk of sounding uncommonly direct, it must be said that Hoagwood's book makes for a vexing, at times infuriating experience. Much of it tends to shift back and forth between long, mostly associative narrative sections, occasionally punctured by short, opaquely sententious statements. These terse, apodictic claims strike a defiant, self-privileging pose, albeit one that rarely reflects on its own presuppositions. "Even political themes," Hoagwood asserts, "are *themes*; criticism that explains a work as a set of political ideas would still be an idealistic criticism; a material book requires a bibliographical, and not merely conceptual understanding" (100). Or, somewhat later: "No personal intention exhausts a book's meanings. No book is identical to an idea" (150). Such claims have something Quixotic about them, as though Hoagwood was fighting imaginary opponents; for who, in this day and age, would seriously advocate a conflation of text and idea. Particularly in his negative fixation on "mentalistic" or "personalistic" approaches to romantic texts Hoagwood seems to forget that such a critique assumes a reified, Cartesian paradigm of consciousness that had obviously undergone extensive qualification, not only by German Idealism (particularly Schelling and Hegel), but also by the rising discipline of hermeneutic and linguistic philosophy (Herder, Coleridge, Humboldt, Ernesti, Schleiermacher) and, perhaps most astutely, by the Jena Romantics (particularly F. Schlegel and Novalis).

Only gradually do we recognize that the official antagonist in this study is the concept of intentionality, which Hoagwood defines so broadly as for it to prove nearly coextensive with conceptual activity itself. Time and

again he rejects interpretations as “mentalistic,” “personalistic,” “idealist,” “individualistic,” and his impatience with approaches that focus on psychology, interiority, or subjectivity in general (to say nothing of psychoanalytic readings) is peremptory and absolute. Hoagwood’s claim that “questions of meaning are never reducible to questions of intention” (101) yields some surprising and (if the term is still permissible) “unintentional” results. Most curious among these is a conspicuous animus toward imaginative, figural, and generally aesthetic productivity. Speaking of Coleridge’s “Moral and Political Lecture” vis-à-vis his “France: An Ode,” Hoagwood waxes impatient: “The mentalizing hermeneutics of Romantic studies have traditionally tended to suppress . . . shared features of poetry and political prose” (90); indeed, only its publication amidst the political, “authentic” matter of the *Morning Post*, Hoagwood claims, “prohibits enclosing the poem in the magic circle of aesthetic irrelevance.” Literariness, invariably, is construed as “a pattern of symbolic submergence of polemical content” (6), as “the transcoding operations of poesis” (9), and as “figurative displacement” (10). Godwin is said to have “novelized [!] . . . and otherwise displaced his (then illegal) contentions,” just as Coleridge’s poems of the 1790s are rather backhandedly praised as “marvellous symbolic displacements” (138). What Hoagwood, in a rather charged expression, views as the “duplicity” intrinsic to literature in general, may well have proven a necessary tactic in harsh, repressive circumstances. Yet in his view, literature ought to be (or, more precisely, ought *to have been* during the time in question) “a call to action, and not a form of entertainment” (138), a rather crude opposition that appears indifferent to any gains made in aesthetic and literary criticism since Horace’s *aut prodesse, aut delectare*.

Similarly, his account of C. T. Smith’s *Beachy Head* as a poem in which “romantic illusion” is embedded in the form of the Hermit’s poem, and consequently as a poem that serves “as a warning about the danger and the delusion of rhetorically formed phantoms” (148–49) exemplifies the larger dilemma of this study. Hoagwood’s claim that some romantic texts succeed at demystifying the very idealizing and rhetorically self-created worlds that he otherwise regards as defining of the period’s ideology only leads to further contradictions: for such a reading (of Charlotte Turner Smith no less) predicates its core claims of having overcome a certain version of the “romantic ideology” on what, in fact, may well be regarded as a key-component of that very ideology: the idea of the *reflexive* text. In his effort to reclaim the “social meanings” of literature from all that supernumerary language (a.k.a. literature), Hoagwood advances his conception of “a philological and bibliographical criticism [that] moves outside the artificial limits [!] of poetic textuality to take account of documentary, economic, and social dimensions of literary production” (151). Much of the book

comes perilously close to being a mere catalogue of material differences and descriptive particulars, a purely quantitative inventory of material facts to which, however, the critic no longer dares attach any interpretive values. The almost aphasic breakdown of Hoagwood's narrative, its almost instantaneous erosion of any interpretive momentum as a result of its rigid focus on material specifics to be "read off" the text's surface—e.g., the "title page"—is particularly apparent in the accounts of Blake and Byron.

Ultimately, there is no more compelling way of illustrating an argument's strengths and weaknesses than by showing how capable it is of integrating the many facets of its declared topic, and pointing out those it chooses to exclude or ignore. As that goes, *Politics, Philosophy and the Production of Romantic Texts* has much to say about the "bibliographical code" of Hays's *Victim of Prejudice*, about the countless material differences of coloration, pigmentation, and *Gestalt* in Blake's *Book[s] of Urizen*, and about Murray's design of a title page and advertisement for the 1814 co-publication of Byron's *Lara* and Rogers' *Jacqueline*. Yet what we do not find—not anywhere in 200 pages of critical writing—is a sustained interpretative engagement with the language and the psychological dynamics that give "Romantic Texts" their specificity and their dramatic force. For example, for Hoagwood to transpose all semantic difference into the material shape (coloration, sequencing of plates, etc.) of Blake's illuminated books, however striking those may prove, is to ignore the fundamental distinction between *conditions* that allow for, and perhaps encourage, the production of (most likely heterogeneous) meanings and the actual *practices* that positively bring into existence specific meanings. Needless to say, grasping the latter would require an attentive conception of *reading* as a distinctive historical type of behavior, which in turn might be situated in relation to the period's general mode of production.

Hoagwood's marked resistance to textual interpretation emerges occasionally in nearly programmatic form: "Th[e] commonality between the discourses of politics and poetry . . . need not (and for my purposes will not) treat the linguistic medium as an ultimate foundation" (32). Naturally, those readers with a stronger inclination to rhetorical, textual scrutiny (as indeed most of the romantics themselves) would likely begin by taking exception with the very phrase "linguistic medium." There is something perilously self-confirming about the assertion that writing in a "literary" or "symbolic" mode constitutes by definition an act of "substitution." It is a hypothesis (though Hoagwood often enough treats it as a confirmed and accepted fact) reminiscent of Godwin inasmuch as it implies that "issues" can be (and properly should have been) conceived and stated in transparent, literal, and direct ways. What remains unclear, however, is what alternative rewards Hoagwood's readings will produce. His preliminary conclusion

about Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* seems at once conceptually hazy, formulaic, and ultimately inconclusive.

The novel's polemic is therefore not a question of whom Hays was with and whom she was against; of course she was with the oppressed, especially the oppressed sex, and with the poor, and with the democrats, and she was against the despots, the inherited aristocracy, the inheritors of private wealth, and their minion ministry. But the novel is about something larger than those specifiable persons, those economic facts and legal fictions. It presents those (and all) social structures as representations; it is a fiction that means that sociopolitical structures are both powerful in mortally material ways and, nonetheless, fictions. (127)

The reading of Hays once again partakes of the same crude opposition between authentic and inauthentic writing, poems invariably obscurantist in their literary pretensions ("marvellous symbolic displacements") and, alternatively, an occasional novel (such as *The Victim of Prejudice*) that allegedly "refuses to restrain its referential power" (138). Such unconvincing categories seem alarmingly indifferent to anything that literary theory over the past twenty-five years or so has taught us about the complex and pervasive nature of figural and symbolic structures. Like a handful of the romantic period's uncompromising rationalists (Godwin comes to mind) Hoagwood continually moves from observing fictional or figural forms to indicting these constructs as "false" (e.g., "The fictitiousness of custom, the falsity [sic!] of prejudice" 139). By comparison, it would seem that even Edmund Burke, who is the target of this characterization, had a far more nuanced understanding of the loose aesthetic philosophy that was embodied in terms like "prejudice" and "custom," terms he viewed not so much as essential truths, but as symbolic ways of dispensing "consolation" in a world whose political and economic structures and human potential Burke recognized to be irremediably deficient.

A number of criticisms can ultimately be presented only in the form of a catalogue, itself evidence that, in repudiating any conceptual or methodological platform, *Politics* has effectively eroded much of the ground on which a coherent and significant argument (and cogent responses to it) might be built. At times, the book rehearses a great deal of factual information while revealing comparatively little about its larger narrative and conceptual purposes and intents. While this seems particularly true of the protracted listing of material differences among the various copies of *The Book of Urizen* (103-13), it also compromises the earlier discussion of "custom" (54-70) which seems largely driven by the associative logic of that term. Without doubt, Hoagwood is very well read in the by now

sizable body of scholarship on the 1790s, but his account of "The Domain of Political Action" (Chapter 2) does little to advance the portrait of those years as it has emerged in the seminal studies of E. P. Thompson, Iain McCalmain, David Worrall, David Epstein, Nicholas Roe, to name only a few. Similarly, a single paragraph on Wordsworth (62–63) seems hardly calculated to extend our grasp of Wordsworth. No readings are undertaken in support of Hoagwood's thesis, perhaps because his sole claim—viz. that Wordsworth's major works are "ideologically ambiguous" (62)—has become something of a commonplace and, when presented in such unvarnished form, hardly warrants further proof. Somewhat erratically, Hoagwood goes on to credit Wordsworth and Shelley with a "polemic [that] contradicts the individualistic categories of interpretation" (whatever we are to understand by these), only to claim, next, that "Wordsworth sloganized [sic!] the illusion of Romantic subjectivity" (4). These occasional inconsistencies and discontinuities are probably inevitable in any study, but in this one they are the result of a materialist, bibliographical approach pushed to new, particularist extremes.

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Regina Hewitt. *The Possibilities of Society. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Sociological Viewpoint of English Romanticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Pp. 231. \$18.95 paper.

Sociological studies of literature are hardly new, as important work in that well established field extends from Leo Lowenthal to Pierre Bourdieu. However, Regina Hewitt in her new book on romanticism and sociology has *not* written a sociological study of romantic writing. Rather, she discovers in some romantic writing forms of sociological thinking that anticipate the fully developed sociological insights of the "founders" of sociology itself: Weber, Durkheim, Mead, Tönnies, and Simmel. Whatever the weaknesses, theoretical and practical, in Hewitt's book, there is no question that her conceptual framework is novel, interesting, and very promising. Seeing Blake and Wordsworth as Freudians a century before Freud's own writings on the unconscious is by now conventional wisdom, but seeing Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats as classical sociologists is truly original.

The first two chapters provide a capsule history of sociology's origins and how national disciplines developed in Germany, France, the United States, and England. Hewitt acknowledges how problematic these two

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