

nonconformity in Blake cannot be taken as identical with an anti-ecclesial stance, given his involvement with a number of radical Protestant churches in London in the 1780s and 1790s. The issue with Wordsworth is equally complex, given his long and faltering journey towards Anglican orthodoxy. Roberts's conclusion asserts that literature can 'take us closer to a depiction of a multifaceted human universe than any single discipline can' (103); he adds in an endnote that 'This may be why systematic accounts of Wordsworth's and Blake's religious beliefs are never really satisfying, because they replace the dynamic life of poetry with the static of doctrine' (116). What this does not credit is the way that doctrine can be a dynamic spur to poetry, as happens in, for example, John Dryden's masterpiece of religious controversy, *The Hind and the Panther* (1687). The remark shows a rigidity which runs directly counter to the stated ambition of Roberts's book.

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Sue Chaplin and Joel Faflak (eds.) *The Romanticism Handbook*. London: Continuum, 2011. Pp.235. £17.99.

A handbook of English literature for students, it seems, needs to be reliable in terms of literary facts, informative enough to support the development of further research, and broad enough to accommodate a wide range of academic interests and adapt to the various circumstances under which the subject may be taught. *The Romantic Handbook* deals with a large number of topics and contents with different research perspectives, including: historical interpretations of the Romantic age; a chronology of important events from the late 1700s to 1837; biographical information on poets and authors; and a collection of critical writing on seminal topics in contemporary English Romantic studies, bearing such titles as 'Changes in Critical Responses and Approaches', 'Canonicity', 'Sexuality and Gender', and 'Race and Ethnicity'. Indeed, in the way it has been designed for students, it seems exemplary.

However, I need to address at least two points which may be of concern if this handbook is to be ranked amongst the most useful resources: first, its use as a source of factual information about English Romanticism, and second, its effectiveness in fostering discussion and the development of questions about what makes English literature (including Romanticism) a valuable subject of study for future generations. As for the first point, once you begin reading the series of

critical essays, starting with Joel Faflak's, you may find much of use, but when reading the earlier section, you may become suspicious about factual information in this book. There was no 'Royal Institution of Science' (xxxi), but the Royal Institution in London. Humphry Davy lectured there from 1801, not just in 1807 (xxxi), and he first delivered his famous Bakerian lectures in the autumn of 1806. Byron's *Childe Harold*, Canto 4 was published in 1818, not in 1816 (xxvii). John Clare died not in 1894 (21) but in 1864, and though De Quincy was indeed 'throughout his life plagued by financial problems'(28), he became a temporary patron for Coleridge when he inherited a substantial amount of money from his father in 1807. The late 1790s was a creative period for Wordsworth and Coleridge, yet it never saw the publication of 'The Ruined Cottage', an early draft of which Wordsworth finished in 1797 (see 37): how then could this poem have so quickly come out in print? Moreover, Wordsworth's famous phrase describing the composition of poems — 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling' — did not appear anywhere in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, but in the second one (see 36). Errors also seem to accumulate in references to Coleridge: 'Kubla Khan' had never been included in any published volume of his poems, let alone the editions of *Lyrical Ballads* (see 22), until 1816, when Byron's patronage allowed it to be published in a volume of poems including 'Christabel' and 'The Pains of Sleep' by his publisher, John Murray. Moreover, 'Christabel' was not kept out of the first but the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (see 22). The following remark is most striking: when the *Lyrical Ballads* 'appeared in a second edition in 1800' (actually it appeared in January 1801), it contained 'only Wordsworth's contributions and a preface, also written by Wordsworth' (106). Coleridge's poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* — 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'The Nightingale', and 'The Foster-Mother's Tale' — were part of all of the editions, though in different orders, with substantial revisions by the author; furthermore, the late addition in the second edition, 'Love', became a favourite for Victorian readers. These errors are not trifles especially given that they appear in a handbook for undergraduate students. Facts say more than criticism in some cases. (An electric edition of *Lyrical Ballads* edited by Bruce Graver and Ron Tetreault, which contains 'Dynamic Collation', would be far more useful for ensuring accuracy of textual history.) Regarding the critical essays, we are told that 'the canon is not secure at all, because it is made in our image'(153). The *Lyrical Ballads* may not be excused from this canon-breaking scrutiny, but demystification of the canon cannot be effective if the argument is unfaithful to the facts.

A strong point of this handbook lies in its incorporation of a substantial amount of information concerning recent critical studies of Romanticism, which reflects the fact that the interdisciplinary interests of literary studies have expanded, not only to include historical approaches, but also other academic fields, such as gender, science, and postcolonialism. While reading this book, you may perpetually have to ask yourself about what kinds of literature can be objects of literary research, or what kinds of critical views can be applicable to a certain area of literature. An example is seen in terms of gender. Interest in gender can be seen in various parts of this book: in the biographical information of women poets who were previously neglected in the history of English literature, in the inclusion of 'Gender' as a Key Critical Concept, and in the critical essays, especially, on the one on sexuality and gender by Elizabeth Fay. Occasional references to gender seem to be mixed with other interests, such as canonicity and aesthetics, which leads us to suspect that the headings in this book have their own limitations, and that the contents needed to have been selected and organized more carefully, in order to make them sharper and more useful for further investigation.

This handbook explores minor literary figures as well as gender concerns. I recognize that a critical approach to periodicals, such as *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood Magazine*, or *Quarterly Review*, seems necessary for the analysis of the social construction of readership, which might be one of the forces organizing the literary world into a hierarchal order dominated by male authors. Moreover, many of the books reviewed in the Romantic area, sometimes nearly half of those in a single issue of a review journal, contain aspects of travel literature and have colonial concerns. Colonies might be debatable areas of effeminized subjects, and the interests of review journals were presumably configured according to gendered power politics. As for science in the Romantic age, the authors of scientific literature cannot be limited to a small circle of men of science who were friends with certain Romantic authors, but, rather, should extend to those who wrote articles in scientific journals as well as popular science books. Thus, to investigate the literature of the Romantic age is to dip into a chaotic hubbub of printed works. However, making a map of books we view as worthy of consideration is, even in a specific subject area, a dizzying mission.

Joel Faflak describes this dizziness as follows:

The more broadly we define Romanticism and the Romantic period, the more we risk watering down the distinctive character of Romantic Studies. With

increasing economic and social pressures on the very universities and colleges within which Romantic Studies came to institutional prominence, some see the writing on the wall for Romantic Studies. Some say this is as it should be: such cultural designations are too hegemonic and restrictive. Others bemoan this possible future: Romantic Studies having developed such a historically and theoretically diverse body of scholarly knowledge, it would be a tragedy to lose the very sense of cultural ‘discrimination’ that makes the further enrichment of this corpus possible. Either way, we *can* say with some certainty that such struggles, anxieties and possibilities remain profoundly reminiscent of the same period to which they address themselves. (137–38)

Given this awareness, this book may communicate with those with a wide range of research perspectives on English studies, possibly worldwide; and it may be beneficial to students of English Romanticism to read it in light of contemporary political concerns governing academia in North America and Europe, as well as in other countries in which English studies have become part of the literary tradition.

Waka Ishikura

Ruth Robbins. *Oscar Wilde*, London and New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. £14.99.

Ruth Robbins’ *Oscar Wilde* is an indispensable critical account of all things Wilde. It is written in a delightful, almost conversational tone and astutely examines an array of Wilde’s works. Robbins’ perceptive readings fuse observations about Wilde’s life into engaging and persuasive discussions of his major writings. Most welcomingly, Robbins comprehensively discusses Wilde’s less explored texts such as ‘Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime’, ‘The Canterville Ghost’, ‘The Model Millionaire’ and ‘The Sphinx without a Secret’ as well as his fairy stories, poems, and prison writings. General readers who are unfamiliar with Wilde’s critical canon will find detailed summaries of traditional approaches and interpretations of his works. For instance, Robbins offers an insightful overview of how Wilde’s ideas are rooted in Ruskinian, Arnoldian and Paterian views. She details Wilde’s extension of their