

that the fragmented nature of the soap operas reinforces patriarchal values, which undercuts the subversive potential of the genre. But some might argue that she underestimates the critical awareness of viewers. Overall, *The Matrophobic Gothic and Its Legacy* makes some intriguing claims regarding the trajectory of matrophobia, but more work needs to be done in order to construct a truly convincing historical narrative.

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Robert Miles. *Romantic Misfits*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. x+246pp. £50. ISBN 978-1-4039-8993-2.

Robert Miles begins *Romantic Misfits* with a “simple sentence” that productively complicates the most clichéd notion about Romanticism that still circulates in popular culture: “Although all Romantics are misfits,” he writes, “some misfits did not fit” (1). Miles defines “misfits” in two senses: those writers excluded from literary history in order to establish a Romantic canon, and those writers canonized by virtue of their exclusivity, a misfit status earned as they transcended the literary marketplace, their genius neglected by all but a privileged and discerning few. This moment of Romantic canonization, occurring between “a radical Enlightenment and its reactionary counter” (8), coincided with the disintegration of the public sphere (6); literary culture, Miles contends, came to value original genius and an aesthetic independent of material contingencies and commercial pressures at the expense of broader, more democratic public engagement with the world of letters. Through arguments that are well grounded in period aesthetic theory and literary culture (in particular the satellite industries of publishing and reviewing), Miles’s five chapters test this claim.

Chapter 1—on forgeries of Shakespeare produced by William Henry Ireland from 1795 to 1796—squarely proves Miles’s thesis. Heavily influenced by Herbert Croft’s *Love and Madness* (a novel composed of forged letters that defended one of the most notorious forgers of the era, Thomas Chatterton), Ireland fashioned himself as an illegitimate trickster who (like Chatterton) rose, “self-propelled, through the force of his own genius” (21). Miles persuasively shows how Ireland’s failure to pass off his productions as those of the nation’s original genius resulted mainly from the changing nature of the public sphere. With the politicization of belletristic discourse in the 1790s, the “courts of the republic of letters” were increasingly imagined to be unfit—too radicalized—for literary debate; it was thought that only a

few connoisseurs and professionals could be trusted to evaluate artistic production (58, 60). Poetic appreciation was no longer “a matter of the free exchange of rational opinions upon literary issues”; it became, rather, “a matter of isolated worship” in which—though acts of the imagination or though careful study of “authentic English originals”—the “spirit of genius” might be apprehended and reproduced (61).

The strongest arguments in the chapter on “Gothic Wordsworth” come towards the end, when Miles proves his case that, while Wordsworth began to “create the ‘taste’ by which he was to be relished,” his readers “in turn instructed Wordsworth in the taste by which he was to become successful” (92). Establishing the extent to which the Gothic, as a literary genre and as an established set of tropes, was deeply engaged in the political projects of the public sphere, Miles links the “decisive shift” in Wordsworth’s “ideological outlook” to his “abandonment of the Gothic” (65). In leaving the Gothic behind, Wordsworth “withdraw[s] from the public sphere” and embraces lyric interiority: he abandons criticism of human institutions for close study of human nature (65, 97). This shift, Miles argues, was dictated by a reading public that was increasingly bourgeois, nationalist, and unwilling to become embroiled in the complicated engagements with otherness that Wordsworth’s Gothic poetry required (93, 67).

In his third chapter, Miles provocatively juxtaposes Thomas Carlyle’s discussions of Sicilian con artist and impresario Count Cagliostro and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, revealing striking similarities in how Carlyle’s response to both pits the material against the transcendental. As a transitional figure between the Romantic and Victorian eras, Carlyle’s disgust with the material—the body in particular—as he elevates a certain strain of transcendental aesthetic philosophy is especially relevant to a reception study of Romanticism. Miles mines this vein of disgust from Carlyle (directed at Cagliostro and Coleridge) to Coleridge (directed at himself). Like Cagliostro, Coleridge did not fit Carlyle’s definition of or need for original, purifying genius; Coleridge’s person and personality stood in the way, blinding Carlyle to those elements of the transcendental project that they shared. Coleridge, in turn, found himself, as a poet, unable to fit the paradigm he had established as a metaphysical critic, principally in the pages of *Biographia Literaria*, where, Miles argues, Coleridge becomes “his own misfit” (131, 121).

Miles next focuses on the “generic misfit” of the Romantic novel, or a subgenre that he calls the “philosophical romance” (133, 145). The philosophical romance, with its concern for readers’ interiority, its use of allegory and foundling heroes, and its blending of genres, was marginalized, Miles argues, because its “political tendencies and symbolic reach” adhered to the Enlightenment notion of a public sphere

(134). With the breakdown of the public sphere, the genre's inherent characteristics were deemed undesirable; the philosophical romance fell through the cracks, and with it the reputations of some of its chief practitioners, among them William Godwin and C.R. Maturin. The achievement of one Romantic-era novelist, Jane Austen, paradoxically contributed to the philosophical romance's obsolescence both in its own historical moment and in the process of consolidating a Romantic canon. After Austen, the novel—with its emphasis on the quotidian and on characters' interior lives—was approved, but not as an artifact of Romanticism (145). Miles carefully situates his astute assessment of Austen's contribution within the contexts both of her contemporaries and of recent Austen scholarship.

In his last chapter, Miles contends that, although early Romanticism was a Dissenting project, fostered by implicit faith in the public sphere, late Romanticism was built on the exclusion of Dissenting culture (174) and on the decline of the public sphere. Miles makes this case by analyzing Anna Barbauld's contributions to early Romanticism and her subsequent alienation from Romantic ideology and praxis. To conclude both chapter and book, Miles offers a reading of Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" in order to show Coleridge's—and, by extension, institutional Romanticism's—divergence from Barbauld (197). This works in the first case, but not as well in the second. *Romantic Misfits* reads as a series of essays on a set of related themes (Miles's introduction describes the book this way); while Miles works to highlight these themes across the book's five chapters, at times the threads of argument get lost. A concluding chapter would have been welcome.

Through these individual investigations, Miles also pursues a critique of "institutionalized Romanticism" (Romanticism as conceptualized from the Victorians onward) that finds current scholarship still beholden to the "cultural investments that were made in the original moment of Romantic misfitting" (7): specifically, the notion of the autonomous male poet whose genius antagonistically defined itself against the demands of the literary marketplace. Miles distinguishes this aspect of his project from New Historicist arguments by claiming that Romanticism emerges from "constant dialectical play" between late-Enlightenment optimism and counter-Enlightenment misanthropy, rather than from a set of "ideological commitments" (using Jerome McGann's phrase) that chart a course from one to the other (11, 8). The reception of Romanticism, Miles claims, has privileged "values that cluster around the Counter-Enlightenment pole of the dialectic," and these values coalesced in the "myth of the Romantic misfit" (12). Re-examining this myth within a revised model of Romanticism's "ideological shifts" (11), Miles offers a nuanced understanding of Romanticism's origins, cultural manifestations, and legacy. *Romantic Misfits* makes important

points about the limitations of the historical models that have organized Romantic studies, and it attests to the rewards of critically examining scholarly clichés and cultural givens.

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Emily Hodgson Anderson. *Eighteenth-Century Authorship and the Play of Fiction: Novels and the Theater, Haywood to Austen*. New York and London: Routledge, 2009. xiii+181pp. US\$95. ISBN 978-0-415-99905-2.

Emily Hodgson Anderson's interesting but ultimately frustrating book analyses work by five women writers, Eliza Haywood, Frances Burney, Elizabeth Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth, and, briefly, Jane Austen. All are best known as novelists, but they also wrote plays, and their novels incorporate, and are shaped by, tropes of theatricality. They "depict characters who perform their feelings" (7), thereby challenging eighteenth-century, and our, assumptions about subjectivity. The stage offered a "model of identity that assumed the possibility of a gap ... between external appearance and internal essence" (9), and the authors appropriate this model in their prose fiction. In different ways, they "privilege emotion as the defining, consistent component of identity": for Haywood the key emotion is love; for Burney suffering; Inchbald "treats feelings much more comprehensively"; and Edgeworth, for whom drama is primarily a tool of her lifelong concern for education, "associates thinking and feeling" (10, 11). Hodgson Anderson meticulously and suggestively shows how key themes and techniques of the plays are continued in the prose fiction. Moreover, she considers not only the literary work of these writers, but also the work of self-construction, emphasizing how the obstacles they face as women writers are represented through theatrical metaphors. For an eighteenth-century woman, writing, and even claiming a self, become "theatrical" acts (12). These assumptions are substantiated in some subtle and suggestive close reading.

Today's recession-panicked scholarly publishers favour short books, and Hodgson Anderson's (only 139 pages exclusive of acknowledgments and notes) has the strengths and weaknesses that this truncated format imposes. It is concise, focused, and properly selective; but at the same time I would have liked to see some links developed more, or at least made more explicit, and at points more time needs to be spent on signposting the argument and explaining key terms. As well, surprising gaps remain: Aphra Behn, an obvious candidate for consideration as an author of both fiction and drama, is relegated to a few brief mentions.