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Aims and Scope: Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is an online journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

Maureen McCue, *British Romanticism and the Reception of Italian Old Master Art, 1793–1840* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 204pp. ISBN 978-0-7190-9033-2; £60 (hb)

HUMANITIES SCHOLARS WHO ARE PERSISTENTLY REMINDED about the necessity of making their research interdisciplinary should definitely turn to Maureen McCue's *British Romanticism and the Reception of Italian Old Master Art, 1793–1840* for an object lesson on how to combine disciplines not simply for the sake of 'interdisciplinarity' as a catch-all idea, but rather in order to broadly contextualise a given topic and represent it in a fair and comprehensive manner. Very much to the advantage of her book, McCue understands the Romantic reception of Italian Old Masters not merely as the popularity of ekphrastic passages in the period's verse, but as a far-reaching phenomenon that left its imprint not only on literature and art but also on the contemporary book market as well as social habits and institutions. As McCue puts it when stating her thesis, Italian art was 'a key force in shaping Romantic-period culture and aesthetic thought' and 'an avenue through which Romantic writers could address aesthetic, political and social issues, often simultaneously' (p. 23). Thanks to her clear argument, successfully applied methodologies and vivid exemplification, McCue certainly leaves her readers with the impression that this was really the case.

The book opens with a fairly extensive Introduction which, apart from defining the study's goals and outlining its contents, provides insight into those aspects of the Romantic period which help properly contextualise the reception of Old Masters in British Romanticism. Central here is Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital', which sheds light on the way the appreciation of Old Master art transcended class boundaries (especially in comparison with the traditionally aristocratic Grand Tour of the previous century) and became a democratic experience enabling 'a variety of Britons [...] to shape their own personal, social and national identities' (p. 9). McCue further illustrates the differences between the Romantic and the eighteenth-century approaches to Italian art by what she calls a 'shift in focus from Rome to Florence' (p. 14), that is, from (neo)classical fascinations epitomised by what Rome offered to a heightened interest in Renaissance Tuscany. Though the juxtaposition serves the purpose of highlighting the role of Florence in the Romantic imagination, one might have doubts about it doing so at the cost of the Eternal City, especially given the fact that it was Rome that displayed the magnificence of the High Renaissance (including Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement* and Raphael's *Stanza* which are discussed in some detail by McCue). To paint a multifaceted background for the subsequent analyses, McCue also touches upon some characteristics of post-1815 travel writing, the specificity of Romantic responses to visual arts as well as changes in the circulation of art, both in print and through cultural institutions. The Introduction articulates a number of objectives the study will pursue, some of which foreshadow the innovative findings the work indeed offers as it develops. What may raise doubts is the author's aim to 'challenge [...] the unspoken assumption that the art of the

Renaissance was uncontroversial simply because it was, and has remained, at the centre of the Western canon' (p. 5). Is there anything to substantiate the limits of 'our present-day understanding' (p. 6), as McCue puts it, of Old Masters? Is being part of the canon tantamount to being 'uncontroversial'? Fortunately, such minor issues do not in any way undermine the impressive task undertaken by the author.

In the first chapter, McCue proceeds to account for the impact of Italian Old Master art on the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century national discourse in Britain, and on its tangible manifestations in the form of public art galleries in major British cities. McCue argues that acquiring artworks was at times represented as a way of protecting them from perishing and thus helped the British to fashion themselves as a highly cultured people. Central here is the notion of class, as the democratic experience of Italian masterpieces at the beginning of the nineteenth century contributed to the formation of 'a new generation of connoisseurs', no longer limited to the aristocracy. McCue also addresses the French-British rivalry during the Napoleonic wars, highlighting the role of art market in the attempts to prove Britain's superiority. Arguably, the most intriguing part of the chapter is the one which concerns the attempts to 'engraft Italian art on English nature', as William Hazlitt put it (qtd p. 25). McCue refers to de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807) to illustrate the difficulty in reconciling the Catholic aesthetic of suffering and physical pain with Protestant detached sensibility, thus situating the debate over the arts in the context of the North-South dialectic. As McCue argues, the Romantics attempted to separate the religious content from the artistic form that was an expression of genius, traces of which can be found in contemporary travel writing and correspondence. The appropriation of the social and mercantile context surrounding Old Masters did not pose such difficulties. Through a closer look at the Liverpool-located patron and philanthropist William Roscoe, the author of *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (1796), McCue points to the ways in which Tuscan 'commercial humanism' could be transposed onto British soil. The chapter closes with a discussion of the intricacies of the so-called 'Anglo-Italian identity', showing how the appreciation of Italian heritage helped 'construct a definition of the self' (p. 62).


Chapter 2 is a concise, coherent and convincing discussion of the phenomenon of connoisseurship in the 'new museum culture' of the nineteenth century. McCue follows a clear trajectory of argument to demonstrate the shift from the eighteenth-century idea that only the representatives of the highest stratum of society were capable of accurate aesthetic judgment to the belief that both the experience and criticism of the arts transcend traditional class boundaries. The democratisation of art experience was a consequence of the emergence of mass tourism in the aftermath of Napoleonic wars, which appeared to be interrelated with the development of exhibition culture in the contemporary metropolis. These phenomena, as McCue points out, were reflected in contemporary travel writing and gallery guidebooks respectively. The chapter closes with a discussion of the 'poetic connoisseur', that is, a member of 'an aristocracy of taste, based on a refined sensibility and an innate ability to perceive and respond to beauty and

genius' (p. 77). Focusing on art commentaries of P. B. Shelley, Byron and Hazlitt, McCue argues that 'poetic connoisseurs' created a widely emulated model for art appreciation.

The final two chapters of McCue's book are literature oriented and offer a wide panorama of art-oriented themes in Romantic-period prose and verse (Chapter 3) and a focused study of a text which is arguably very much illustrative of the Romantic ideal of arts symbiosis—namely, Samuel Rogers's *Italy* (Chapter 4). The third chapter, in a way, provides a background for the following reading of *Italy*, as it sheds light on the various ways of marrying, as it were, the art of painting with Romantic literature. McCue successfully exemplifies the development of an inter-artistic language which coined and elaborated on such notions as 'genius', 'expression' and 'gusto', as well as discussing attempts to 'novelise' artworks through engaging with the biographical content behind them. All this serves to prove the point that while the eighteenth-century debate over the sister arts was 'a simple contest as to whether the visual or verbal arts could claim superiority' (p. 89), the Romantics developed a deeper understanding of the relationship as 'a dynamic and mutually creative symbiosis' (p. 89). Although the latter part of the comparison does not raise doubts in the light of the presented evidence, McCue apparently cannot resist the temptation to vindicate Romantic-period literary achievements at the cost of those of the eighteenth century. Even if the gradation of the arts was indeed a vital component of the sister arts debate in the Enlightenment, it did not 'overwhelmingly reduce' the debate itself. As a matter of fact, it was also concerned with the ideas that proved immensely powerful in Romanticism, such as imagination and expression, whereas the belief that the arts complement each other and operate most forcibly when united paved the way to the poetics of synaesthesia and the ideal of a total work of art.

Though not necessarily a 'close reading', as McCue labels it, the analysis of Samuel Rogers's *Italy* is an illuminating display of the potential of a case study to paint the multifaceted background out of which the text in question emerged. McCue's insightful and persuasively argued discussion not only points to *Italy* as a successful example of the marriage between the sister arts, but also situates the work in the context of the dominant trends in the publishing market. Rogers's *Italy* is here presented as an apt illustration of 'how interconnected were the literary market and the market for fine art, specifically Italian art, in that period' (p. 159). The book, McCue argues, is also illustrative of the Romantic trend to 'imagine' Italy, predominantly through an engagement with Old Master art; a trend that was characteristic of 'a variety of forms and media' (p. 159). The *Italy* of McCue's analysis is a text which merits close critical attention, as it accurately renders the impact of Italianate fashions on nineteenth-century British culture. The popularity of the various editions of the book throughout the century indicates that Rogers in particular, and the Romantics in general, left an imprint on the ways 'successive generations' (p. 159) responded to Italian Renaissance art.

Despite some very minor inaccuracies, Maureen McCue's *British Romanticism and the Reception of Italian Old Master Art, 1793–1840* presents its readers with

a rich and nuanced picture of the phenomenon in question. McCue successfully creates a multidimensional context for her focused readings and moves between disciplines with exceptional ease. Her book makes a valuable contribution to interdisciplinary research into the Romantic period. 

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Chase Pielak, *Memorializing Animals during the Romantic Period* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 178pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-4146-1; £60 (hb).

CHASE PIELAK'S *MEMORIALIZING ANIMALS DURING THE ROMANTIC PERIOD* explores the disruptive potential of animals in British Romantic literature and the surprising encounters that they induce, both in life and from beyond the grave. For this book, 'beasts matter because they appear in Romantic literature at points when its authors figure moments of ontological category rupture—when being itself is challenged' (p. 3). Poetry has a privileged role in such crises, since it 'is the ideal medium to convey the linguistic disturbances that accompany ontological disturbance' (p. 3). *Memorializing Animals* is a philosophically ambitious attempt to juxtapose materials from literary theory and animal studies with Romantic literature. It wants to unearth 'the beasts that reside within us as well as those buried during the Romantic Period' and to explore 'the spaces in which we can encounter [the] animals whose corpses litter our literary landscape' (p. 12). In the process, Pielak covers a number of well-trodden areas from a fresh perspective and also focusses on some comparatively neglected texts from the period, such as Wordsworth's *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815).

The opening half of *Memorializing Animals* might be seen as primarily looking at different modes of relation between humans and nonhumans. The first chapter traces literal and figurative animals in Charles Lamb's writing, attempting to demonstrate an aspiration to sociability in Lamb's encounters with nonhuman animals. However, since many of these encounters occur at the dining table, Pielak argues that the desire for communion often masks the impossibility of assimilating, processing or remembering individual animals. The second and third chapters argue for more successful connections between human and animal lives in John Clare's poetry. Nonetheless, these more productive meetings are also accompanied by psychological difficulties: Pielak claims that Clare's cascading reflections on nature are frequently disturbing and create a sense of melancholia that 'threatens to do away with the coherent self' (p. 55).

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Nicola Lloyd is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Bath Spa University. She specializes in fiction of the Romantic period, with a particular focus on the Irish national tale and the interactions between Romanticism and Enlightenment. Her doctoral thesis, which she is currently preparing for publication, considered the influence of Enlightenment discourses of moral philosophy and perception on Romantic-period fiction. Nicky has published articles on the Irish novelist Lady Morgan and is one of the authors of *The Palgrave History Gothic Publishing: The Business of Gothic Fiction, 1764–1835*, due for completion in 2017. She is currently preparing a scholarly edition of Mary Julia Young's gothic-national tale *Donald; or, the Witches of Glenshiel* (1805).

Andrew McInnes is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Edge Hill University. He has recently published his first monograph, *Wollstonecraft's Ghost: The Fate of the Female Philosopher in the Romantic Period* (Routledge, 2016). His research interests include women's writing of the long eighteenth century, the geographies of gothic fiction and children's literature.

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