

***ROMANTIC LEGACIES: TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY CONTEXTS* EDITED BY SHUN-LIANG CHAO AND JOHN MICHAEL CORRIGAN**

*Romantic Legacies: Transnational and Transdisciplinary Contexts*, Shun-liang Chao and John Michael Corrigan (eds). New York: Routledge, 2019. £120.00. ISBN 9781032241357.

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*Romantic Legacies: Transnational and Transdisciplinary Contexts*, edited by Shun-liang Chao and John Michael Corrigan, is a collaborative inquiry into the legacies of the Romantic tradition. An introduction by the editors is followed by sixteen essays, split between five sections reflecting five paradigms of Romanticism and its legacies: Realist, Fin de Siècle, (Post)Modern, Environmental, and Oriental. The book positions itself in dialogue with eleven earlier publications which directly address the legacies of the Romantic movement (all are listed thoroughly in the introduction), as well as with three publications with a similarly comparative approach as the one proposed by Corrigan and Chao, namely Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre's *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity* (2001), Charles Larmore's *Romantic Legacy* (1996), and Peter Gay's *Why the Romantics Matter* (2015). However, as the editors state, '*Romantic Legacies* recognises but moves beyond these earlier studies by offering transnational contexts and transdisciplinary perspectives' (11). In their overview of the earlier publications, the editors make a point of distinguishing between 'multinational', 'international', and 'transnational' approaches to the study of Romanticism, an important point to which I shall return.

Corrigan and Chao open their introduction with an epigraph from Jean Paul Richter: 'Every century is differently romantic' (1). They link this statement to Friedrich Schlegel's assertion that 'the Romantic type of poetry is still becoming; indeed, its peculiar essence is that it is always becoming and that it can never be completed' (1). Thus, they lay out the aim of their volume which is to consider 'the ongoing project of Romanticism' (1). They treat Romanticism as a 'designation for a historical movement in which a mindset or worldview, if not first formed, at least emerged to prevail in the West', and aim to show how that very mindset continues to permeate art long after the end of the Romantic era (1). The editors view Romanticism as a movement which was both transnational and transdisciplinary at heart, and which is best analysed through comparative methodologies. Finally, they point to three liminal figures—Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Baudelaire, and John Ruskin—who all helped to transport and transform some of the key Romantic ideas.

The first section puts under scrutiny the notion of 'Realist Romanticism'. The essays here blur the line between Romanticism and Realism, showing how the latter used the former to establish and develop its own ideas, not simply by discarding Romantic attitudes, but also by incorporating and transforming them. Rachel Bowlby's 'Romantic Walking and Railway Realism' is a phenomenal, well-written opening piece to the edited volume, that draws the reader in with a brilliant line of inquiry into the two modes of transport and their relationship to Romanticism and Realism respectively. Geoffrey Baker's 'The Use and Abuse of Romance', in turn, approaches the question of the shifting reception of Walter Scott between the 1830s and the 1930s. Yuri Corrigan's 'Chekhov on the Meaning of Life', moves beyond Western Europe and considers the relationship between Nietzsche's and Chekhov's approaches to 'creating and discovering meaning' (67). Sadly, Corrigan's is the volume's only essay which considers Eastern European literature, where Romanticism played a fundamental socio-cultural role, and whose legacies are pivotal to all subsequent epochs in all art forms.

*Romantic Legacies*' second section is titled 'Fin-de-Siècle Romanticism' and it is perhaps the most transdisciplinary—or rather *interdisciplinary*—part of the book. While the section opens with a traditional literary analysis centred on the Anglophone sphere—Ya-Feng Wu's 'Wilde's Romantic Self-Fashioning at the Fin-de-Siècle'—it then moves onto two fascinating essays on visual arts and opera. Shao-Chien Tseng's 'Delacroix, Signac, and the Revolution in Fin-de-Siècle France' and David Chandler's 'Mediating Richard Wagner and Henry Bishop' are deeply engaging and invite the reader to approach the subject-matter with different analytical tools, grounding their analyses on painting techniques, artists' engagement with scientific scholarship on human perception (Tseng), as well as socio-economic circumstances which prompted the development of opera in Germany and hindered its growth in England (Chandler).

The section on '(Post)Modern Romanticism' remains anchored in Anglophone Romanticism, with all three essays taking Ralph Waldo Emerson's or Samuel Taylor Coleridge's thought as their point of departure, alongside other Anglophone writers. In 'Platonism, Its Heirs, and the Last Romantic', Arthur Versluis takes a closer look at the work of Kathleen Raine (1908-2003) whom he deems 'the last Romantic' based on her intellectual affinity to Platonism. Justin Prystash's 'Romantic Idealism in Coleridge and Its Afterlife in Bataille and Irigaray' analyses the indirect engagement of Georges Bataille and Luce Irigaray with Coleridgean idealism, which draws from Hindu mysticism and is embodied in the act of meditation. The section's last essay is perhaps the most unusual, as it tackles the legacies of American Romanticism in the popular TV series *Mad Men*, created by Matthew Weiner. It traces the series' allusions, quotations, and reconfigurations of Emerson's and Walt Whitman's ideas regarding self-transcendence. This move beyond the realm of 'high art' is certainly appealing, and a welcome one.

The fourth section engages with the environmental legacies of Romanticism, drawing from recent ecocritical scholarship. Caroline Schaumann's 'Tracing Romanticism in the Anthropocene' provides a fascinating analysis of Ludwig Tieck's *Der Runeberg*, and argues that its plot can teach us how to cope with the volatility brought about by ecological crises. Next, Sophie Laniel-Musitelli engages with the nonhuman in her 'Nonhuman Vision from Blake to Contemporary Ecocriticism', by analysing William Blake's poetry. Finally, Carmen Casaliggi's 'Turner, Ruskin, and the Climate of Art' considers the indistinctness of J. M. W. Turner's paintings, linking it to the issue of environmental pollution in his time, and the impact of Turner's art on the thought of John Ruskin. Hers is a truly transdisciplinary inquiry into the dialogue between visual art and social thought, as it shows how the latter can productively incorporate models of representation and perception from the former.

The final section opens with the essay which most thoroughly realises the transnational aim of the book. It is the only contribution which attempts to look beyond the traditional, Western-centric understanding of Romanticism, and instead 'challenge[s] both [the] successionist chronology and the diffusionist model whereby Romanticism is imported from European traditions whose residual authority remains unquestioned' (251). Indeed, Steve Clark's 'ReOrienting Romanticism' best exemplifies the potential of a truly transnational literary critique. Johannes D. Kaminski's 'Grafting German onto the Chinese Revolution' is a thought-provoking piece on the reception of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* in early-twentieth-century China, and shows the malleability of Western European Romanticism. In a similar vein, Ou Li analyses the reception of William Wordsworth's poetry in China in the twentieth century in his 'Two Chinese Wordsworths'. Finally, in the closing essay, 'The Sentimental Grotesque in Tetsuya Ishida's "Self-Portraits of Others"', Shun-liang Chao provides an insight into Tetsuya Ishida's use of grotesque, and shows how his understanding thereof springs from Romantic humour, so central to Romantic ethics. Indeed, Chao concludes that grotesque and self-mockery invite Ishida's audience to 'awaken

the sensible soul (...) to the depths of human suffering and unhappiness in modern Japan' (324).

Whilst positing that the Romantic movement was a 'quintessentially transnational and transdisciplinary' phenomenon, *Romantic Legacies* seems to settle down for a traditional, Western-centric mode of defining Romanticism and its legacies. Although the editors venture out into non-Western literatures and cultures in Y. Corrigan's essay on Chekov, as well as in the section on Oriental Romanticism, one cannot shake the feeling that their inquiry into the transnational nature of Romanticism relies more on analysing the spread of Western ideas to 'the Rest', rather than inviting a re-thinking of Romanticism at its core (with the notable exception of Clark's essay). The Romantic figures which permeate the book and serve as a springboard for a discussion of Romantic legacies hardly ever leave the Anglo-Franco-Germanic cultural sphere, preserving the hierarchical structure of cultural dissemination. Similarly, the editors' promise that their book is a transdisciplinary one does not entirely come to fruition, as only two out of sixteen essays—by Casaliggi and Chao—truly cross constructed boundaries between different art forms. In what is otherwise a fascinating volume on the various legacies of Romanticism, there seems to be a gap between the promises made in the introduction, and the essays that follow. Perhaps the way to salvage this would be to refer to 'international' and 'interdisciplinary' Romantic legacies, rather than settling for the prefix 'trans'. 'Trans', I believe, invites the scholar and the reader to assess critically and rethink the construction of borders, whether between countries or forms of art, emphasising their artificiality; 'inter' accepts their existence and shows how those seemingly separate fields intersect. 'Multi', interchangeable at times with 'inter', could be another choice, although it seems evocative of stasis, rather than active exchange. Corrigan and Chao themselves acknowledge in the introduction that a 'transnational paradigm often entails a reciprocity in which what was transplanted is informed by its new soil and transformed as a result' (20). That is perhaps what is most lacking from *Romantic Legacies*—the multidirectionality of academic inquiry and the truly transnational exchange between 'the West' and 'the Rest'.