

the problems of history and futurity differently from Keats, one may still be forgiven for finding this account surprisingly reductive in a reader as typically attentive as Rohrbach. The “Defence” in particular sets its argument to work via a range of disturbed temporalities, and the “shadows of futurity” it summons at the end may not be as altogether different from Keats’s “mists” and “mysteries” (5) as she claims. The latter argument concerning Keats (and Austen and Byron) remains powerful and persuasive. *Modernity’s Mist* is an impressive work that both offers new perspectives on Romantic historicism and shows the historical stakes—which is to say, too, the ethical and political stakes—of Romanticism’s formal complexities.

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Maurizio Ascari, and Stephen Knight, eds. *From the Sublime to City Crime*.
Monaco: LiberFaber, 2015. Pp. 297. 20€.

From the Sublime to City Crime comprises twelve essays—not including the editors’ co-authored introduction—covering a period in the development of British, American, and European crime fiction that snugly overlaps what we conventionally style the period of international Romanticism. Several of these were originally published in a thematic issue of the Italian journal *La Questione Romantica*, co-edited by Maurizio Ascari and Stephen Knight under the title *Crime and the Sublime*. Among British writers, the volume ranges from William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft through Thomas De Quincey and James Hogg to G. M. W. Reynolds, author of the sprawling serialized novel *The Mysteries of London*, whose first weekly number appeared in October 1844. Their American cohort is represented by Charles Brockden Brown and Edgar Allan Poe, while Honoré de Balzac, Eugene Sue, and a handful of pioneering Scandinavians draw our attention to continental developments. The editorial intention ostensibly embracing all of these essays, aside from their shared generic and historical focus, is to reveal the gradual precipitation of what came to be called “detective fiction,” a subgenre of crime fiction epitomized by the “whodunnit” and traditionally distinguished by its foregrounding of the investigator’s (inevitably successful) problem-solving abilities, out of a vigorous but more heterogeneous category of popular fiction founded on the compelling—i.e., “sublime”—power of the sheer mystery and terror of crime itself.

The ideological underpinnings of this literary-historical understanding are not, in themselves, new, and can be traced back to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and its critical progeny, like D. A. Miller’s *The Novel and the*

Police. In the words of editors Ascari and Knight, "Out of disciplinary procedures came a hero. He, at times she, resolved threats through skill, application, and occasionally courage. . . . Fulfilling the ideological destiny of classic bourgeois fiction . . . the detective knotted the loose ends of individualistic anxiety for the isolated cerebral workers of late capitalism" (9-10). What Ascari and Knight add to this by-now standard account of detection's disciplinary impact is an eye for the persistence of the sublime as "the underground river" of later detective fiction that despite—or, perhaps more accurately, because of—its repression by the Enlightened forces of rational investigation "enduringly remains the dynamo of excitement and anxiety that both drives the narrative of crime and insistently demands its euphemisations" (10).

That, at least, is the announced thesis of this collection, and while it is not, for various reasons, consistently realized by the contributions that follow, it does provide a useful *vade mecum*. The contributions themselves—by scholars spanning the globe from Slovakia to Canada and Italy to Australia—are uneven in rigor as well as depth, but all provide useful entrees for Romanticists looking to engage with the ever-growing body of criticism on crime fiction and its governing poetics.

The essays are arranged in roughly chronological order from the 1790s to the 1840s, moving at the same time from the Anglophone trans-Atlantic sphere to the continent and back at last to England. Among those scholars familiar to British Romanticists, Maurice Hindle, editor of Penguin's groundbreaking 1988 edition of *Caleb Williams*, kicks things off with a close examination of Godwin's debts to Edmund Burke's Sublime and the Gothic tradition, setting the loose parameters for discussing these topics in the essays that follow. Here the sublimity under investigation is almost invariably of the Burkean variety, linked to terror and largely interchangeable with "the Gothic." The contributors following Hindle include Alessandra Calanchi on Brockden Brown's "aural sublime," Ascari examining the "element of power" (104) that co-inhabits De Quincey's writings on murder and his Gothic revenge fiction, Struan Sinclair on Poe's "super-perceivers," Giacomo Mannironi on Balzac's debts to British Romanticism, Heather Worthington on the *Blackwood's* fictions of physician/lawyer Samuel Warren, and Anna Kay on the mid-century popular reception and "sublime" interpretation of real-life murderess Maria Manning. All offer information and arguments that will prove of interest to Romanticists drawn to this early period in the history of crime and detective fiction. Space considerations, however, force me to impose my own, admittedly idiosyncratic, criteria in selecting the following five essays for particular attention: Katie Garner's "Mary Wollstonecraft's Sublime Crimes," Matthew McGuire's "Crime Fiction and the Radical Sublime: Godwin, Hogg and

De Quincey," Yvonne Leffler's "Early Crime Fiction in Nordic Literature," David Levente Palatinus's "Primum Non Nocere—Autopsy, 'Bad Medicine' and the Body in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," and Stephen Knight's "The Mysteries of the Cities and the Myth of Urban Gothic."

Garner's essay closely examines Wollstonecraft's activities in Scandinavia in 1795 on behalf of her conniving, two-timing lover, the American conman Gilbert Imlay—activities that, in Garner's view, made Wollstonecraft "an early type of amateur detective" (39) who was repeatedly forced, in her investigations, to straddle the line between complicity and condemnation. This compromised position shapes the narrative of the travelogue she wrote the following year, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*. Here, Garner remarks, Wollstonecraft's "background in crime . . . enables her to feel a new level of sympathy for the criminals she encounters on her travels, and ultimately leads her toward a radical rethinking of the criminal's art and the pleasurable deviancy that lies at the heart of the sublime" (42). The criminological perspective adopted throughout this essay will prove new and suggestive for Romanticists, impinging as it does on many well-recognized features of Wollstonecraft's life and work.

Matthew McGuire's "Crime Fiction and the Radical Sublime: Godwin, Hogg and De Quincey" sets out to repair a gap in writings about early crime fiction, which tends to neglect Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Juxtaposing Hogg's novel with Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and De Quincey's "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts," McGuire sets out to show how the first two authors deploy the sublime "as a way of both representing crime and interrogating its potential as a signifier for broader historical/ideological concerns" (83), namely, "the nature of political tyranny in Godwin and the ideological inheritance of the Enlightenment in Hogg" (84). McGuire generally succeeds in establishing this affinity, although the central reason for the critical neglect of Hogg as a crime writer—the prominence he gives the metaphysical concept of "sin" as distinct from the juridical category of "crime"—goes unaddressed. McGuire seeks to establish a more direct line of influence between Hogg's 1824 *Confessions* and De Quincey's 1828 "On Murder Considered," a seminal contribution to the emerging literary-critical awareness of crime writing as a distinct popular genre at this time. Here the evidence, as McGuire acknowledges, is largely circumstantial and dependent primarily on both writers' connection to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and he makes a better case, in my opinion, when he turns to De Quincey's 1821 *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* as a precedent, although that connection has long been accepted by other critics.

Yvonne Leffler's "Early Crime Fiction in Nordic Literature" is a salutary reminder to parochial Anglophone Romanticists of the international spread of the Gothic, and of allied developments loosely identified as "Romantic," far beyond the well-known triumvirate of Britain, Germany, and France. Leffler clearly traces the emergence of the "disciplinary" investigative thread through four representative stories written by four different Scandinavian authors from 1829—two years after Eugene-Francois Vidocq, the retired head of the Parisian Sûreté, published his *Memoirs*—to 1843—two years after Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" first appeared in print. Her essay has the potential, I expect, to provoke a reconsideration of the forces contributing to the emergence of Nordic Noir as a global force over the last decade or so.

David Levente Palatinus's "Primum Non Nocere—Autopsy, 'Bad Medicine' and the Body in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" is one of the essays that doesn't engage substantively with the ostensible topic of the volume—"the sublime"—offering a more traditional Foucauldian analysis of the institutional under-structure (including a shared emphasis on "theatricality") facilitating the cultural exchanges between medicine and law, as well as scientific and punitive forms of "investigation," from the Renaissance through Romanticism. Ranging beyond the expected literary applications, e.g., to *Frankenstein*, the essay comments insightfully on Hogarth and Blake while focusing on the consequences for the disciplines of medicine and law of the Murder Act of 1752 and the Anatomy Act of 1832. The first stipulated that dissection would become a punitive procedure, explicitly making it part of the punishment for a capital crime, while the second granted medical institutions access to unclaimed corpses of criminals.

Stephen Knight's "The Mysteries of the Cities and the Myth of Urban Gothic" vigorously challenges the by-now conventional tagging of the early nineteenth-century serialized "Mysteries of the City" novel as "Gothic," going to great lengths to show the indebtedness of books like G. M. W. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London* to a tradition of urban writing deriving principally from popular melodrama and "on-the-town" varieties of urban guidebooks like Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821). This essay is one of the most scholarly and heavily researched in the volume, as we might expect from the distinguished reputation of its author, and Knight does succeed in routing his principal nemesis, the unfortunate Robert Mighall, from the field. One is left, however, with the feeling that the Gothic itself cannot be so easily dismissed as an influence on the genre as a whole. The very word "Mysteries" in the term under which such gargantuan novels are classed bespeaks a Gothic orientation. What is George Lippard's subtitle to *The Quaker City—The Monks of Monk Hall* (not to mention the subterranean chambers of Monk Hall itself)—if not an allu-

sion to Monk Lewis and the whole Gothic tradition of occulted monastic debauchery? In any case, "Gothic" soon graduated from a kind of literary arbovirus, like a mosquito-borne pathogen easily traced along its vectors of influence, to the status of a "gut flora" discoverable in the viscera of every conceivable literary genre of the nineteenth (and subsequent) centuries. The paths of the original infection soon became irrelevant. This is not to say that Knight hasn't made a valuable contribution in calling our attention to all the other popular influences on the urban "Mysteries" genre. However, it might be more useful to start thinking of the Gothic itself as a particular instantiation of a much larger phenomenon, a post-Enlightenment recourse to the pre-modern in general—noble savages, hearts of darkness, "Oriental" barbarity, West Indian Obeah—with a view to interrogating the abstractive, deracinating, and depersonalizing impact of modernity.

Despite its usefulness for Romanticists generally who might be interested in making forays into crime fiction, *From the Sublime to City Crime* suffers throughout from a vague deployment of crucial terms like "the sublime" and "the Gothic"—both used interchangeably with "terror" and related Burkean lexemes of affect—as well as "Romantic," which seems never to have weathered the frosts of deconstruction or annealed in the fires of New Historicism, but here retains the expressionistic tenor that M. H. Abrams assigned it in *The Mirror and the Lamp* more than half a century ago. The text is also, sadly, lacking an index and displays the typographical carelessness often found in English texts printed by foreign publishers. That said, the individual contributions are all fresh and provocative, and should lead to fruitful conversations across the disciplinary boundaries between Romanticism and crime fiction, while making those boundaries more permeable.

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Heidi C. M. Scott. *Chaos and Cosmos: Literary Roots of Modern Ecology in the British Nineteenth Century*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press. 2014. Pp. 224. \$64.95.

Chaos and Cosmos is an authoritative, truly interdisciplinary book that turns the usual impulse of Romantic studies on its head: instead of "sketching out a literary ecocriticism," to paraphrase Jonathan Bate's famous phrase, Scott ambitiously sets out to find the origins of contemporary ecological methods in Romantic and Victorian literature. Each of the structures of thought of the book's title is connected both to a nineteenth-century liter-