

evalism's faith in "the law's reinforcement of social hierarchy" (190).

The Epilogue, "Medievalism Becomes Expensive," locates this shift from populism to elitism in the rebuilding of Westminster after the fire of 1834. At a cost of over two million pounds, the thirty-year project, like the equally lavish Coronation of George IV a little more than a decade earlier, "helped move medievalism . . . toward a courtly, aristocratic medievalism that maintained rather than reanalyzed existing power structures" (192). As with the "Mediaeval Court" exhibit at the 1851 Great Exhibition, whose ticket prices stratified onlookers into those who were entitled to imagine enjoying the beautifully made replicas and those who were not, the "idea of medieval Britain now functioned less as an evocation of ancient rights than as the confirmation of present-day privilege" (194).

Popular Medievalism's wide-ranging and meticulous analyses insist on the textuality not just of print sources but of structures, installations, and events. Simmons' uncovering of the connections among such disparate texts makes this a fascinating study. Her demonstration of the reach of populist discourse in the era—deliberate and otherwise—extends the work on Romantic radicalism and responses to it of Marcus Wood and Kevin Gilmartin. In its analysis of the rhetorical strategies behind conscious historicizing, *Popular Medievalism* aligns with Ian Duncan's 2007 *Scott's Shadow*. In *Reversing the Conquest*, Simmons argued compellingly that imagining the past is always, as she puts it here, a "process of reading oneself into the text" (145) of the past. In *Popular Medievalism* she demonstrates that this gesture of historicizing the present by locating its origins in the medieval past was as much, for Romantics, a strategy against as it was for Victorians a way of upholding existing political structures.

Margot Finn, Michael Lobban and Jenny Bourne Taylor (eds), *Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Nineteenth-Century Law, Literature and History*

(Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) viii + 191. £50 / \$80

A Review by Gregory Leadbetter
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Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Nineteenth-Century Law, Literature and History brings together essays first presented at a 2005 conference on these themes at the Huntingdon Library. The distinguished editors reflect the interdisciplinary method, with expertise in modern British history (Finn), the legal history of common law jurisprudence (Lobban) and literary criticism (Bourne Taylor). The issues are teased out in a lucid Introduction which admirably defines the limits of the book and opens the large questions involved.

The theme of "legitimacy" and "illegitimacy" is rescued from the dryness that the title might imply by a focus upon the trope of public identity and the dramatic blurring of boundaries between appearance and authenticity at the heart of many 18th and 19th century novels. That dramatic energy derives especially from the historical character of the period, as the freshly-minted forces of new money sweep through and occupy a culture still founded upon shame and status. There was much at stake, not just for the individual, but also – as novelists recognised – for the fabric of society itself.

These changes posed not only a legal challenge but also an imaginative and ethical one. The "wider preoccupation with the discovery of hidden kinship through illegitimate origins that pervades nineteenth-century literature" (3) to which the editors allude can also be read as the expression

of pre- or supra-social energies trying to find a way into society – outsider forces seeking accommodation, and prising open legal and customary encrustations through moral authority and the claims of feeling. In legal and literary terms, the figure of the child born outside marriage, then defined as "*filius nullius* – nobody's child – under common law" (5), here assumes symbolic resonance. These themes find an oblique outlet in Josephine McDonagh's engaging essay "On Settling and Being Unsettled: Legitimacy and Settlement around 1850." Focusing on *Bleak House*, "the nineteenth-century text that more than any other constructs an opposition between the institutions of the law and the humane work of literature" (50), McDonagh plays on the legal implications of "settlement" to suggest that the novel enacts an imaginative *re-settlement* of England, on new terms defined by the form itself: "the genre of love and fellow feeling," and (punningly) the "capacity to be moved" (62, 63).

The political implications of an irruption of feeling into the normative structures of social and public life were amplified when played out in an imperial context, where such structures were inseparably involved in the constitution of British power. Margot Finn explores a case in point in "The Barlow Bastards: Romance Comes Home from the Empire," which follows the story of Sir George Hilario Barlow, a senior civil servant of British India, whose wife Eliza bore a child to his ward – a much younger Barlow from another part

of the family. The scandal highlighted not only the "imperial household families of the Anglo-Indian governing elite as a social and political formation" (34), but also how, as Finn goes on to show, "illegitimate sexual relations and the birth of bastard progeny were basic facts of life" among that elite (40). The conflict between social form and function and the complexity of fact and feeling always produces theatre.

Rohan McWilliam's "Unauthorized Identities: The Impostor, the Fake and the Secret History of Nineteenth-Century Britain" addresses the "specific kind of theatricality" involved in impostor narratives, where "self-consciously performed selves" (68) challenge and disrupt familial, proprietorial and social lineage through the medium of fictitious histories. McWilliam is nicely alive to the ways in which fiction fuels not only the desire and persona of the impostor, but also the receptiveness of culture to certain orders of impostor – namely, those who fit patterns themselves derived from fiction and popular narrative (the wronged hero, or the rags to riches tale, for instance).

Certain issues raised by the book have a particularly timely feel – not least the fluid limits of commercial morality in a time of economic uncertainty and high-stakes opportunism. Randall McGowen explores the case of Henry Fauntleroy (a forger who used his dubious talents to prop up the books of a failing bank) with particular regard to the role of Fauntleroy's social status in the public reaction to his crime and execution. Michael Lobban also takes up the theme of

class in his essay on "Commercial Morality and the Common Law," which highlights the tendency in the 19th century to distinguish the "respectable pursuit" of playing the stock market from "unrespectable gambling, of the sort engaged in by the working class" (121). Although new territory back then, "the boundaries of legitimate commercial behaviour" (132) are still very much in dispute.

Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Nineteenth-Century Law, Literature and History does not seek to take on the City of London and Wall Street, however, and the final essay in the collection, Timothy Alborn's "Dirty Laundry: Exposing Bad Behaviour in Life Insurance Trials, 1830-90," deals with the dishonesty of life assurance policyholders in concealing disease or (more usually) "intemperance" when taking out their policies. With money up for grabs, ruin around every corner, and new wheezes to get rich quick proliferating, the famous Victorian obsession with morality seems altogether understandable, in context.

The distinction between formal legitimacy and moral legitimacy played out in so much of the literature corresponds to the distinction, unique to common law legal systems, between legal and equitable interests – an adaptation which grew to have far-reaching significance in the dynamic and hazardous social forces set loose in the 19th century. That this distinction might appeal to a lawyer, a historian and a literary critic bears testament to the rich ground opened by this consistently interesting collection of essays.

Gavin Budge, ed. *Romantic Empiricism: Poetics and the Philosophy of Common Sense 1780-1830*

(Bucknell Univ. Press, 2007) 202 \$47.50

Tim Milnes, *The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge*

(Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010) viii + 253 \$85.00

A Review by William C. Horrell
Kingston, Arkansas

David Hume (as was his custom and habit after reducing the world to ash and candle wax) often quit his study to head downstairs, there to enjoy the charms and conversation of his guests. For skeptical principles, he advised, "may flourish and triumph in the schools, where it is indeed difficult, if not impossible, to refute them. But as soon as they leave the shade, and by the presence of the real objects, which actuate our passions and sentiments, are put in opposition to the more powerful principles of our nature, they vanish like smoke, and leave the most determined skeptic in the same condition as other mortals" (from *Enquiry Concerning*

Human Understanding, Section XII, Part II). Thus, it is often told, Hume's all-but-impossible-to-refute Skepticism brought British empirical philosophy to the brink of an abyss, and the rising generation of Romantic writers took a transcendental leap forward, their imaginative way now lit by German Idealist torchbearers.

This account is, of course, terribly over-simplified, but it does suggest what *Romantic Empiricism* and *The Truth About Romanticism* aim to correct. Both insist that the Romantic critical tradition has so amplified the German transcendental in-