

Klepač's study is a valuable contribution to Australian studies because so far there have been only three studies on Baynton even though contemporary critics agree that the literary voice of this author is of the highest importance for the understanding not only of the formation of Australia but also of its present moment.

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Martina Domines Veliki and Cian Duffy, Editors. *Romanticism and the Cultures of Infancy*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. xv+273. ISBN 978-3-030-50428-1

Published in 2020, the chapters making up the volume *Romanticism and the Cultures of Infancy* focus on “cultures of infancy” and their diverse manifestations in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. The volume’s editors set the general tone by stating in their Introduction that it was during that period that “the concept of ‘infancy’ became across Europe a central topos in a range of different areas of enquiry, genres of cultural productivity, and national contexts” (2). Considering the generally accepted scholarly notion that childhood has been the invention of Romanticism, the inherent dynamics between the cause and the consequence of that notion, as well as its literary and non-literary appearances, is open to debate, which is the governing principle behind the chapters in the book under consideration. Furthermore, the volume’s objective is not so much to clarify “the extent to which late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century cultural texts conform to either a stadial (Enlightenment) or a genetic (Romantic) configuration of infancy, but rather the extent to which such texts tend to blur or even reject that kind of dichotomy” (Domines Veliki and Duffy 13). Also, the volume aims to explore the cultural investment in infancy during the Romantic era as a way of crossing boundaries between genres and distinct contemporary disciplines and areas of enquiry, which in turn leads to a discursive and figurative embodiment of a specific epistemology of Romanticism.

Endeavouring to present an “adequate understanding of ‘Romanticism’” (Domines Veliki and Duffy 14), the chapters in the volume approach the time’s “cultures of infancy” as fields of heterogeneous cultural practices. The volume’s first chapter, “‘A detached peninsula’: Infancy in the Works of Thomas De Quincey,” by Domines Veliki and Duffy tracks the engagement with infancy in the autobiographical writings of De Quincey where it plays an important, albeit subversive, role. The topic of disruptive practices of infancy and the crossing of genres and disciplines are being further developed in the chapter on William Blake and infancy, “William Blake’s Infant Joy,” by Robert Rix. In her chapter, “The Infant,

the Mother, and the Breast in the Paintings of Marguerite Gérard,” Loren Lerner writes, at considerable length, of representations of the infant, the mother, and the female breast in relation to the iconography of the French Revolution. In the following chapter, Robert Davis reassesses the origins of the modern conception and practice of infant education during the Romantic period. “Coleridge, the Ridiculous Child, and the Limits of Romanticism,” by Andrew McInnes examines the interaction between discourses of infancy and the ridiculous in a selection of English and German Romantic texts as well as in their afterlives in some contemporary examples. “Educational Experiments: Childhood Sympathy, Regulation, and Object-Relations in Maria Edgeworth’s Writing About Education” by Charles I. Armstrong deals with the questions of infancy and childhood and their complex relations with practical education in the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the next chapter of the volume, Anja Höing investigates the relationship between animal characters and children in moral tales for children, especially in those narrated from the perspective of animals, and aptly demonstrates that “the animal protagonist’s ineradicable infancy” is held up as “a mirror to the child’s transient state of infancy,” thus inviting the implied child reader to “identify with the animal protagonist” but also to “overcome ... its pre-cultural essence in order to develop into a functional member of society” (160). In his chapter, “William Godwin, Romantic-Era Historiography, and the Political Cultures of Infancy,” John-Erik Hansson explores the use of classical and modern history in the education of children and its connection with progressive political change. Lisa Ann Robertson focuses attention on natural philosophy and examines how imaginary infants were used as rhetorical test subjects for the ideas of three influential eighteenth-century and Romantic era thinkers: Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Wedgwood, and Humphry Davy. In the volume’s final chapter, “‘A wretch so sad, so lorn’: The Feral Child and the Romantic Culture of Infancy,” Rolf Lessenich explores writing about “feral children” in late eighteenth- the and early nineteenth-century contexts.

Overall, the volume provides valuable insights into “the richness, the range, and the discursive complexity of the Romantic cultures of infancy” (Domines Veliki and Duffy 19). The explorations of “cultures of infancy,” collected in it, reflect the heterogeneous nature of “infancy” and its cultural representations in various literary and non-literary contexts, and this successfully opens up a space for the discussion of the realization of Romantic epistemology and the emergence of modern modes of writing on infancy and childhood through figurative tropes. The contributors to the volume have also ably demonstrated how “cultures of infancy” can enrich our general understanding of Romanticism and its plethora of modes of expression and literary and non-literary figurations. The volume thus provides an insightful contribution to the area of Romantic studies in general.

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