representations and negotiations of gender, sexuality, and race in slave narratives; and Daphne Brooks’s exciting musicology work on what she terms ‘sonic slave narratives’, are but a few examples of the excellent scholarship contained within this volume. Nicole Aljoe’s and Winfried Siemerling’s respective contributions offer necessary critical perspectives that shift considerations of the African American slave narrative away from a hermeneutic that centralizes the United States. Both essays offer cogent overviews of Caribbean, South American, and Canadian slave narratives, and they each demonstrate this archive’s crucial importance to Hemispheric Studies. If anything, the entire volume would have benefited from a more robust sampling of critical work being done on texts that fall within the wider purview of ‘the Americas’, including scholarship that trains its gaze on writings from different national and colonial spaces, and even narratives produced by black sailors about their experiences at sea. As Aljoe and Siemerling’s contributions demonstrate, there exist many more sites for understanding the variations and innovations of the genre.

To add one other minor critique, the anthologized nature of the Handbook means that it, at times, has a tendency to repeat the same information. This is most apparent in several discrete explanations of the provenance of the federal Works Progress Administration slave narratives and the archival complications that attend scholarly work with those texts. Both of these topics are treated at some length in several different essays. While this likely will not be an issue for readers who will use the book as a reference volume, the redundancy is notable when working through the text in its entirety. Overall, however, The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative provides lucid and theoretically nuanced accounts of the genre without sacrificing comprehensive content coverage. While certain figures like Douglass and Jacobs are frequently mentioned across essays—indeed, it would be difficult to write about the genre without citing them—the essays in the Handbook definitively demonstrate just how many writers and texts are ripe for further study as critical work on slave narrative moves into the twenty-first century. Eric Gardner’s call at the end of his contribution, for scholars of the genre to move forward insisting that, ‘we can know more, even though a host of institutions, generations of racism, and questionable critical practices have steadfastly asserted that we can’t or shouldn’t’, serves as a kind of gateway to the insights provided by this particular volume and an opening onto all of the work that remains to be done (50).

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THANKS to Freud, it became possible for pre-twentieth century writing to be reinterpreted. Problems (for example, what was the exact and literal nature of Dorothy and William Wordsworth’s close relationship?) could be frozen unprecedentedly clear. By the second half of the twentieth century, Kathleen Coburn’s edition of Coleridge’s Notebooks and the Bollingen Series Collected Works were opening Coleridge studies into the broadening Freudian daylight. One belief to emerge was that much of the great muddle of Coleridge’s metaphysics and personal anxieties anticipated its own containment in the imaginative configurations of Psychology.

In the 1980s the biographer Richard Holmes would turn his attention to Coleridge. Holmes would become, and remain, transfixed by the man who imagined the Mariner. Metaphorical ice, mast-high, came floating by. Holmes’s Coleridge: Early Visions (1989) and Coleridge: Darker Reflections (1998) told readers of a gifted and tormented individual whose poetry was significant chiefly as the tip of his iceberg-self. The narrative, however, arrived at a cost: ‘Incredibly’, said John Barrell reviewing Coleridge: Darker Reflections, ‘Coleridge’s last book, On the Constitution of Church and State—a book whose influence on later
thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold was immense—is despatched in 15 lines’. Barrell said also that Holmes gave ‘very little on what [Coleridge’s periodical] the Friend is actually about’. Holmes is justly treasured as a Romantic biographer, and this may be why the complaint (that Holmes’s Coleridge is a couple of books short of the full bibliography) has more often been murmured or muted than made explicit. At any rate, it has been in something of a Bloomian anxiety of Holmes’s Coleridge’s influence that scholars have since been reaching for the higher seriousness, and finding it in the prose.

But even before the effect of Holmes’s Coleridge on Coleridge studies there had been theorists at work more generally on the literary canon who were interested in poetry principally as an adjunct of cultural studies. Remember, for example, Terence Hawkes’s insistence that the legends on Kellogg’s Cornflakes cartons are as good as the best of Shakespeare. At the touch of an intellectual paid to put the canonical and the cereal in the same field, what can poetry do other than just bugger off back to where it came from like a repudiated UFO? With terrestrials like Hawkes, who needs extras? Down-to-earth professors’ predilections can drown out that strange and essential something-or-other found in the best poetry, poetic writing, and poetic theorizing:

a great Poet must be, implicit if not explicit, a profound Metaphysician. He may not have it in logical coherence, in his Brain & Tongue; but he must have it by Tact / for all sounds, & forms of human nature he must have the ear of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desart, the eye of a North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves that strew the Forest—; the Touch of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child… (Coleridge to William Sotheby, 1802).

Ewan James Jones has written Coleridge and the Philosophy of Poetic Form out of the conviction that too little effort has been expended primarily, or properly, on Coleridge’s poetry. Jim Mays’s Coleridge’s Experimental Poetics and Morton Paley’s Coleridge’s Later Poetry (as Jones acknowledges) are two notable exceptions. Jones has proclaimed the existence of, and pursued, the spark of philosophy that brought Coleridge’s poetry to life—or irregular aliveness: ‘Coleridge did not only philosophise most ably through verse because he happened to be a virtuoso poet. It was also because, due to a motley array of temperamental and contingent factors, he was unable to present some of his most striking insights in anything like the form of philosophy proper.’ Just as Coleridge’s Notebooks are (for Holmes) poetry by other means, so his poetry is (for Jones) philosophy by other means.

In academia, a dead poet’s disorderly corpus (including poetry that isn’t in poetry per se and philosophy that isn’t in Philosophy) may have to be straightened out in order to be seen and believed in by funders. The finest chronicler of the Romantic age, though, wasn’t flummoxed, nonplussed, or reduced to indifference by the crookedness of the highways to the highest thinking: for Hazlitt, of all the voices that helped put the spirit into the age, it was in Coleridge’s alone that ‘Poetry and Philosophy’ could be heard like the ‘music of the spheres’.

Jones’s book is special because it has been inspired by Kenneth Burke’s commendably Coleridgean—and unjustly neglected—work on Coleridge. Jones’s focus on the poetry, however, is more circumscribed and cutting edge than Burke’s baggy, dated and porous appreciation of Coleridge’s literary language. On the ‘ice… everywhere’ passage in ‘The Ancient Mariner’, Jones’s sustained close reading of lines so familiar and hypnotic is rigorous, yet it still feels almost as fluid as the poetry itself: ‘For how, really, do we tell a roar from a howl? Where the ensuing simile (‘[l]ike noises’) helps little, the drawn-out vowel sound of “swound” (like “around”, like “growled”) thickens, and draws the word into, a kind of aural fog.’ Jones never dissects or murders poetry. He leaves the intangible riches (or, for anyone still interested, what used to be called ‘divine inspiration’) intact.

Up and away from the immersive minutiae (yet vitally connected to them, which is the point), Jones also reconsiders some key planets, as it were, in the philosophical firmament by which the poet navigated. (Plato is a conspicuously absent star, but it would be unfair perhaps to expect the sphere of Jones’s influence to
dilate light-years in one book.) For example, he has taken the Cartesian philosopher, Nicolas Malebranche, out from behind the more familiar George Berkeley and, arrestingy, resolved Malebranche as an important (if often overlooked) influence on Coleridge. Jones's more general observations are, like his line-by-line analyses, challenging and convincing, and the all-round strength helps the reader to an indispensable vantage-point over much of the sprawl of Coleridge's genius, and over the current state of work and play in Coleridge studies.

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Here is a new text of Byron's Manfred, with a useful preamble and a series of essays that discuss the various literary works by which it was shaped, and place it within its context. Like all Peter Cochran's publications, it is full of insights not found elsewhere. For instance, Cochran begins by tracing Manfred's origins to Byron's barely articulated desire to write a play for Drury Lane—a subversive thesis that counters the usual notion that it was written for a 'mental theatre'. Cochran argues that, although Byron wanted it to be staged, that hope was dashed by the resignation of Douglas Kinnaird from the theatre's board. He also argues that the play was written with Edmund Kean in mind for the lead, a suggestion supported by the observation that none of the other roles had a chance of upstaging Manfred, as Kean would have wanted.

Cochran returned to the manuscripts in Edinburgh and New York to produce his text of the play. Readers already have at their disposal an excellent version in volume 4 of the Clarendon Byron, edited by Jerome J. McGann. Cochran departs from McGann in several respects. For one thing, he analyses Byron's idiosyncratic views on punctuation, and deduces that texts of his work should leave accidentals intact, as indicated in manuscript. Unlike McGann, he thus 'aims to present Manfred as it was when it left its author's hand' (30). Cochran also presents both versions of Act 3 as part of his reading text, unlike McGann who relegates the early version to the notes. This is preferable, not least for making clear that an early version did exist, and placing the choice between the two (to some extent) with the reader.

Cochran's edition represents an advance on McGann most helpfully in the quality and range of its annotations, which are fuller on the matter of literary antecedents and contexts than McGann is able to be. For instance, McGann says nothing about Thomas Taylor's Pausanias (1794), but Cochran provides extensive quotation from it, along with an incisive essay that recounts how Polidori drew it to his attention. Similarly, Cochran has much to say about the respects in which Manfred responds to Shelley's Alastor and engages with Wordsworth's poetry, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Marlowe's Dr Faustus, even Beckford's Vathek. Again, Cochran's annotations to the play indicate how and when Manfred wrestles with these works. Even on subjects touched on by McGann, for instance some of the Shakespearean allusions, Cochran is more helpful, not least by quoting sources rather than merely referencing them.

In a concluding essay, Cochran provides the fullest stage history of the play so far to appear in print—revealing that, for an allegedly unperformable drama, it has been surprisingly well aired, not least in a production featuring Dame Edith Evans as the Witch of the Alps and Nemesis. But the greatest pleasure of this edition is Cochran's no-nonsense voice, which tells us at page 227 that he thinks the play should never be performed because 'as a poem... it may be fascinating, but as a play it's rubbish'. He then says how, if compelled to direct a production, he would cast Al Pacino in the lead and do most of the effects with lights. The volume concludes with a lengthy, though not exhaustive, bibliography of secondary materials.

Peter Cochran knew more about Byron, and saw him more clearly, as a writer and a man,