Gujarati autobiography. On the contrary, the English autobiography "An Autobiography" occupied the titular space. Suhrud elaborates on this argument to note how subjective experiences and objective narration engage with each other to address Gandhi's narrative methodology.

Suhrud, also, touches upon Gandhi's narrative of his South African experience and analyses the translative barriers in reading the terms 'history' and '*itihasa*' together as equivalents. He understands Gandhi's affinity to summarize Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (1860) instead of translating it from a similar vein of thought. In his reading, Suhrud explores an arduous terrain of language, culture, and politics that had not, hitherto, received enough attention. Hence, Suhrud's text is instrumental in understanding both Gandhi as a character and *Gandhivaad* as a performative aspect of an experience.

Suhrud's text is presented through a close reading of Gandhi's writings; in deed he attempts to construct Gandhi's 'self' in and through the act of translation. Translation, in all its impossibilities, is a performance of reiterating both meaning and essence, if not the stringent form of the text. Thus, Suhrud, almost in a Derridean model, deconstructs Gandhi in order to create meaning. Suhrud's translation is an act of affirming what one may call the politics of absences across texts which could only be explored through the semantic implications of culture.

AYAN CHAKRABORTY
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

ROMANTIC WOMEN'S WRITING AND SEXUAL TRANGRESSION. By Kathryn Ready and David Sigler (Eds.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024. 208 pp.

Overcoming gender inequality was a developmental goal and the world is yet to achieve it. Women face various forms of discrimination across the ages and the period of Romantic Age in the history of English literature was no exception. Interpretations of British Romanticism have focused primarily on the five famous male authors: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Blake and Keats. Evidently, this interpretive gender-bias has ignored the accomplishments of women authors. One of the central characteristics of Romanticism would have to be the decadent erotic and morbid themes represented in *The Romantic Agony* (1933) by Mario Praz where he comprehensively discusses that imagination which culminates in sexual longing, activities and transgressions. These phallocentric actions are what Anne K. Mellor defines in *Romanticism and Gender* as "masculine Romanticism." (19) Transgression, according to *Oxford's Advanced Learner's Dictionary,* is "an act that goes beyond the limits of what is morally or legally acceptable" (1631). Kathryn Ready and David Sigler's edited book *Romantic Women's Writing and Sexual Transgression* talks about how Romantic women writings sexually transgress and how this transgression is represented in their artistic works.

David Sigler introduces the book with the conceptual meanings of sexual transgression and perversion. He begins by quoting Praz where he insists how the Romantics provided a psychological aspect of the process of refining perversity. He follows it up with a series of quotations and definitions to conceptualize the terms 'sexual transgression' and 'perversity'. He discusses Richard C. Sha's *Perverse Romanticism* claiming that "Perversion enables us to reimagine Romanticism from the ground up" (3). He mentions that the gendered, traditional studies of Romanticism encouraged the perception that women and their writings stayed within the particular sexual and mental limits. If they transgressed, it was only done secretly and not publicly. This is done to such an extent that women writers of that era were not even considered Romantic writers. This is because according to the Romantic scholars, male authors possessed the desire to produce works which sexually trans-

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gressed vague values and women writers did not have perverse geniuses to sexually transgress. He further reiterates that only two women Romantic writers (Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley) received mentions in Praz's book which Sigler thinks is highly "sexist" (2). With the evolution of gender studies, male and women have diverged and are separately questioned and understood. Sigler insists upon a Lacanian approach towards sexual transgression by Astrid Gessert which means "stepping over" (35). This means that there is a set limit and that limit divides two different parts: one that is legitimate and the other that is not. The readers would need to understand these two divisions in order to understand transgression.

The next chapter, "Feminizing Romantic Sexuality, Perverting Feminine Romanticism", discusses the female transgressive writers of the Romantic period. Kathryn Ready mentions the names of a female writers' collective and their works which can be studied and analyzed through the lenses of sexual transgression as described in the introduction; she states extramarital sexuality, incest, necrophilia, same-sex love, female romantic friendship and other valuable transgressions in Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Hays, Charlotte Dacre, Mary Diana Dods and Mary Shelley. She, with the help of Foucauldian arguments of reducing harsh punishments in the nineteenth century, claims that "medicalizing and pathologizing of bodies of sexualities" (15) were done. She mentions *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990) by Thomas Lanqueur to explain "a transition … from a one-sex model which regards male and female genitalia as inversions of one another to a two-sex model that considers them as essentially different" (16).

The third chapter, "Reorienting Multiple-dimensional Sex with Objects in *Millennium Hall*" by Kate Singer interprets the novel as one that emphasizes bodies as playthings and spaces which lead to women narratives. Sarah Scott, in her novel *Millennium Hall* (1762), layers these toys and spaces as well as gifts to evaluate the readers' understanding of the objects in a gender-specific manner with their experimental sexual relations rather than heteronormative ones. Toys do not generally assume sexual imagery equivalent to women's breasts (maternal) or the male penis (phallic object), they are mere non-living, neuter-gendered objects as stereotyped traditionally. Scott gives them a sexual dimension in the narratives of women to achieve sexual freedom. For example, the relationship between Miss Mancel and Miss Morgan, in *Millennium Hall* (1762), revolves around the mutual exchange of knowledge and books as Miss Mancel's desire to learn and Miss Morgan's desire to instruct her pleasurably satisfies both. Moreover, Scott also plays with the spaces such as the hall and its pastoral areas in the novel which is equivalent to the female genital space.

The succeeding chapter reimagines necrophilia as a sexual transgression which is opted by Mary Wollstonecraft to gain sexual freedom and rights through her unfinished story, "The Cave of Fancy". The story revolves around Sagestus, a sage, who sedulously desires corpses from a wrecked ship on an island to a point where concupiscence takes over, developing a corpse fetish. Accordingly, Sagestus thinks that sexual attraction towards dead bodies might present new ways and ideas of exploring immortalities and pleasures. Wollstonecraft makes the dead alluring, thus making it sexually pleasing. Rebecca E. May calls this the "necro-gaze" in "Morbid Parts: Gender, Seduction and the Necro-gaze" (168-9) in *Sexual Perversions, 1670-1890* (2009). It also qualifies to be perverse as suggested by David Siglar through the aberration of the type of writing done by Wollstonecraft. Siglar claims that the cave and the beach

> represent death in different degrees: the beach is the scene of death construed chaotically, and the cave represents chaos adapted into a form of living death in which death can be raised to the level of categorical imperative (54).

Mary Hays's second novel, *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) explores the institutions that help patriarchal constructions subordinate women. This is a perfect example of two females who experience sexual trauma but of two different types. The "elder Mary is sexually transgressive whereas her daughter (Mary) is sexually transgressed against" (Hurlock, 72-73). Unlike the women in *Millennium Hall* (1762) who choose to be aided by sex toys while Wollstonecraft preferred corpse as an

apparatus towards sexual freedom, the elder Mary attempts to control her body and becomes a prostitute to earn her living, breaking the shackles of a dominant patriarchal system which bars the women from outrageous acts of transgression. Kathleen Emily Hurlock, in her essay "Sexual Violence, Sexual Transgression and the Law in Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice*", states that the elder Mary "openly chooses and enjoys her transgressive sexuality until she is disciplined for it" (73). On the other hand, her daughter Mary is the "unconsenting victim of a legally and culturally transgressive sexual act" (Hurlock, 73). Thus, the novel delivers feminist potential to gain sexual freedom which leads to the act of resistance against androcentric laws.

The next essay "Thoughts that Breathes and Words that Burn: Barbauld, Masturbation and the Novel" deals with the effects of novel reading on women. Kathryn Ready states that in *The British Novelists* (1810), "Barbauld reiterates the concerns… over the modern growth and the negative influence of novel-reading especially on young women" (90). Here, novel-reading was considered equivalent to masturbation as it gratifies the women. Barbauld associates these masturbatory perils with French novels and romances. On the contrary, she has no objection about the English writers such as Philip Sydney *Arcadia* but according to her there are English writers who experience moral lapses, like William Hogarth and Aphra Behn. Barbauld seems not to be worried about the masturbation which she criticized earlier; instead, she uses figurative, masturbatory language in one of her poems, "Song I". Thus, she indulges in "a degree of autoerotic fantasy in her own writing" (Ready 86).

Mary Shelley had written *Mathilda* (1959) to focus on the medicalization of women's body and aestheticizing death. Crystal Veronie attests that "*Mathilda* expands on…Romantic notions of the fragments concerning women's perspective, sexuality, illness and death" (113). Being sexually assaulted, Mathilda grows up to be a mature woman and voices her narrative in confidence. The character of Mathilda changes from being innocent to a complex one with sexual trauma, loss of parents and illness. On the other hand, the guilt of the failure of her relationship with her father makes her think that her body is responsible for the sexual objectification and incestuous desire by her father. Her father's transgressive desire leads him to his suicide. Thus, eventually Mathilda's body stands responsible for escape from her father's sexual assault.

In this book, Richard C. Sha demonstrates George Sand's transgression of utopian idealism. He says that "utopia acts as a vantage point so that the consequences of transgression are not assumed and can be more readily evaluated" (140). Sand uses transgressions or rather "rule-breaking" (152) as a means to start something new or meaningful in the novel *Indiana* (1832). If Indiana transgresses the marriage, she should be supported economically. Thus, as Kathryn Ready avers, sexual transgression acts as a way to achieve freedom, and Indiana does exactly the same.

In short, the book purveys a wide range of women writings of the Romantic period. It explores the manifolds ways through which women gain freedom, sexually and intellectually. The most interesting of all the essays would have to be "The Necrophilia of Wollstonecraft's *The Cave of Fancy".* Overall, all the essays prove that women were not the objects of medical experiments and tests. Medically and physically, they were active and participated in projecting their voice and their sexual transgressions to the fullest.

TISUK MAZUMDER
The Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata

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