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Aims and Scope: Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is an online journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

the radical trope of the alternative community on one hand and the recuperated and adjusted conservative narrative of history as science on the other' (p. 183).

Price convincingly concludes that 'chivalry allowed for the relationship between property, wealth and political power to be re-examined' (p. 208). By calling into question 'the association between property and power' (p. 209), the early British historical novel recasts the stages of chivalry from their aristocratic associations to consider commercial ones: sentiment and the materialities of history alike must be redistributed and redirected from the nation to the individual as a means of attaining and preserving liberty.

Reinventing Liberty engages with so many primary texts that Price's discussion cannot delve deeply into each work; the textual analyses she provides are relatively cursory, remaining, for the most part, at the level of the novels' plots and general themes. But, since Price's aim is to provide a panorama of and justification for the late-eighteenth-century historical novel genre and its emergence from the economic and political environment of this period in Britain, this cursory approach is effective and useful. By wading through a wide range of works—rather than diving into a select few—Price is able to establish a broader foundation for future studies in the early British historical novel. I finished reading this work energised and with scores of ideas dancing through my mind for approaches to future research on the primary works with which Price engages—and ready to debate the Brexit vote through the lens of cultural history. In sum, the work's merit lies less in literary criticism and more in the cogent contextualisation of eighteenth-century philosophies on display in the stories told about Britain's national identity. 

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Martin Priestman, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 324pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-1954-5; £70 (hb).

THE POETRY OF ERASMUS DARWIN: ENLIGHTENED SPACES, ROMANTIC TIMES aims to recover the poetry and poetics of Erasmus Darwin from behind the rock of Wordsworthian Romanticism by challenging anew its assumptions about poetic diction and the role of metaphor or analogy. Priestman is working against the grain of 'the Romantic Movement, with Erasmus Darwin's absurd efforts the prime specimen of the artificial lumber of "poetic diction" mercifully cleared away

for good by Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* and its Preface' (p. 3). While I disagree with Priestman that Wordsworth's reconceptualised 'poetic diction' engenders 'easy assumptions' about artificial ornamentation—rather, it remains a hard-won innovation in the development of English poetry—it is easy to be persuaded by Priestman's argument that the poetry of Erasmus Darwin has been given short shrift to the degree that his more famous grandson could declare that, in his own time, the poetry was barely read.


As Priestman's enquiry proceeds, however, its ambitious scope becomes more evident and a paradox emerges in relation to his aim of recovering the poetics while at the same time giving due attention to Darwin's use of myth in the context of a Foucauldian epistemic shift from a static Linnaean taxonomy to an early, dynamic evolutionary model. Similarly, Priestman's outline of Darwin's theories of mythology, while pertinent to the project of recovering neglected aspects of the three major poems under discussion, extends into a detailed yet somewhat distracting narrative exploring those fascinating secret societies, the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons. Priestman's lively and informed treatment of these contextual phenomena is so interesting that the reader may be apt to lose sight of the focus on poetics and poetry, *per se*. Ironically, Darwin's poems recede slightly into the background at these stages of the work (Chapters 6 through to 8) despite the worthy objective of providing a fresh treatment of *The Loves of the Plants*, *The Economy of Vegetation* and *The Temple of Nature*.

Chapter 11, 'Romantic Times (1): Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth', ought to be of particular interest to Romanticism scholars, with its nuanced and astute reading of Coleridge's complex relationship to Erasmus Darwin. That relationship is more frequently elided or treated reductively through the brief decontextualised quotation of Coleridge's sometimes damning views of Darwin's poetics. Priestman, on the other hand, is alive to the complexity of tone in Coleridge's letters and applies judicious interpretative attention to the links between the purpose and the recipients of the letters in question before making any assertions about Coleridge's assessment of Erasmus Darwin's poetry.

The genuine strength of Priestman's study of the poetics of Erasmus Darwin is his exploration of a distinctively spatial orientation to the poetry, an 'Enlightenment spatialism' that can be obscured if the poetry itself is evaluated using a Romanticist lens that prioritises time, or 'spots of time', over spatial arrangement. While conceding that Coleridge needs more empty spaces than Darwin provides for the kind of contemplation that recognises genuine pathos, Priestman presses home his point that a writer's poetics ought to be evaluated on its own terms. Such evaluation rightly entails using the aesthetic principles of a poet's precisely historicised context, regardless of whether these principles have been disparaged by Romanticists, then and since. At the very least, it is of legitimate concern that the principles of Erasmus Darwin's poetry are simply ignored by post-Enlightenment readers steeped in the legacy of Romanticism.

Priestman carefully considers the role that Darwin's poetry played in contemporary debates about female education, offering a particularly interesting survey of

the legacy of his poetics as it was taken up and transformed by women. In Chapter 12, 'Romantic Times (2): Later Romantics and Women Poets', Priestman considers women writing poetry influenced by Darwin's didacticism but with an eye to the domestic aspect of flowers and life. Such poetry takes on a less sexual but equally intriguing re-interpretation of 'vegetable love'. Priestman is alert to the problematic category of 'Romantic women writers' and sensitively applies an historicised understanding of the stages of life of the women discussed and their contextual experiences, particularly Anna Laetitia Barbauld (as a poet born in the 1740s).

Overall, the work is clearly and cogently written and fills a gap in the existing literature on the literary aspects of the polymath that was Erasmus Darwin, while simultaneously pointing the way towards further enquiry into his more often obscured role as a 'man of letters'. Priestman succeeds in salvaging the reputation of Erasmus Darwin as the writer of *The Loves of the Plants* from the dismissive satire, *The Loves of the Triangles*, which rendered him a poetic absurdity and buried his poetry as the object of serious study for so long. Re-reading *The Loves of the Plants*, in particular, is a heightened experience as a result of Priestman's effectiveness in opening up fresh ways of discussing the poetry of Erasmus Darwin. Ultimately, Coleridge's observation that Darwin displayed the 'most original mind in Europe' informs Priestman's analysis of Darwin's self-conscious textuality and 'magpie intertextuality' (p. 67). *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times* is a provocative study of a poetic thinker worthy of recovery in light of our current theoretical concerns and abiding appreciation of English poetry. 

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Mark Sandy, *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 188pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-0593-1; £60 (hb).

MARK SANDY'S LATEST MONOGRAPH, *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning*, builds upon his previous work on Romantic subjectivities, legacies and constructions of place. This study unites these previous interests in an exploration of how the language of grief in Romantic poetry is used to articulate the connection between a personal sense of loss and the subject's position within social and literary communities. At the same time, Sandy challenges definitions of 'Romanticism', and demonstrates how writers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth

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