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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.
and characters, Austen’s illustrators necessarily neglect other ones, influencing a reader’s response in the process.

The Making of Jane Austen is not just a book for Janites, however; it is, and will become, a key study for anyone interested in undertaking research that explores the interplay between texts and how they generate meaning across different time periods and genres. Furthermore, by paying attention to those areas and people that have not traditionally been part of the ‘Austen narrative’, Looser shows us how to produce successfully research that is engaging, exciting and important. As she warns: ‘It’s incredibly important that we not keep intoning the limiting stories about Austen, her fiction, and her cultural legacy’ and ‘I worry about our ability to see her beyond the established critical voices and author-celebrities that we’ve so long cited and repeated’ (p. 221). These statements could apply to any author and the way we study their work, which is often, reductively, stuck in the period in which that author was writing. The Shakespeare scholar Terence Hawkes once wrote that ‘Shakespeare doesn’t mean, we mean by Shakespeare’. On the basis of Looser’s superb book, the same could be said about Jane Austen.

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‘Would that the criterion of a scholar’s utility were the number and moral values of the truths, which he has been the means of throwing into the general circulation’, Samuel Taylor Coleridge exclaimed in 1817. He dreamed of an intellectual climate in which an academic’s worth was measured not by the number of words they committed to print, but rather by ‘the number and value of the minds, whom by his conversation or letters, he has excited into activity, and supplied with the germs of their after-growth!’ (quoted in Aherne, p. 279). Coleridge has had to wait a long time to be rescued from charges of indolence and unproductivity, but Maximiliaan van Woudenberg and Philip Aherne attempt to do precisely that. Both studies are intellectual histories whose starting
premise is evident enough to anyone familiar with Coleridge’s extensive canon: that, in Aherne’s words, Coleridge ‘was not exclusively a writer’ (p. 281). As such, both these authors claim that evaluations that focus solely on Coleridge’s literary reputation overlook some of his most significant, and most enduring, legacies. By turning instead to the formation of a Coleridgean methodology, which van Woudenberg traces back to Germany, and the extension of this approach to nineteenth- and twentieth-century academic, pedagogic and theological politics—as Aherne explores—these studies reassess Coleridge’s status in Western intellectual culture.

Van Woudenberg offers a re-evaluation of Coleridge’s German tour, bringing together details from biographies and critical studies with an impressive range of primary sources from Coleridge’s writing and the University of Göttingen’s records. Coleridge and Cosmopolitan Intellectualism aims to ‘provide a more collected resource for the Göttingen period than previously available’ (p. 21), and, to do so, it comprises both an evaluation of Coleridge’s work with regard to Germany between 1794 and 1804, and an extensive set of appendices that include a detailed chronology of Coleridge’s time in Germany, a list of Coleridge’s library borrowings from Göttingen and the lectures he attended whilst there. This generous approach to scholarship, which both stakes Van Woudenberg’s contribution and enables future scholars to develop new arguments from the same material, means that this book deserves to be essential reading for anyone interested in Coleridge’s time in Germany or its legacy. Van Woudenberg is, of course, not alone in recognising that the 1790s witnessed the rapid development of a ‘cross-cultural exchange’ between Britain and Germany (p. 27). His study insists that Coleridge’s research methodology—not the content of his writings—was the most influential and sustained legacy from this period. Van Woudenberg’s approach reflects something of the approach that, he argues, Coleridge developed in Germany: cosmopolitan intellectualism, here, encompasses both ‘Coleridge’s interaction with the constellation of the library collections, the scholarship of professors, and the importance of Göttingen knowledge by foreign students to their native countries’ (p. 19). By demonstrating how Coleridge’s learning in Germany went far beyond the materials he collected for his ill-fated Life of Lessing (one of the many projects Coleridge promised and never completed), van Woudenberg situates Coleridge as a key player in the development of a European academic culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Van Woudenberg thus challenges the conventional geographies of Coleridgean thought. Shifting the focus away from British locations (especially, in this context, Cambridge and London, but also Somerset and the Lakes) towards Germany centralises the intellectual and pedagogical innovations that were underway in Göttingen (p. 5), and which would not begin to be adopted by British universities until the 1820s (interestingly, just at the period when Aherne suggests Coleridge’s influence was beginning to be evident in the Senior Common Rooms at Oxford and Cambridge [p. 195]). As van Woudenberg argues,
Coleridge found that he was fundamentally unsuited to British academic life (p. 35)—or, rather, that British academic culture did not reward the kind of research that Coleridge, with his habits of a ‘library cormorant’, favoured. But for Coleridge, partaking in these innovations had unfortunate consequences for his reputation. What Coleridge needed was a system which recognised, in John Dewey’s Coleridgean summary, that education was ‘a process of living and not a preparation for future living’ (quoted in Aherne, p. 255).

Reconstructing Coleridge’s time in Göttingen via his lecture schedules and library records allows van Woudenberg to offer the Life of Lessing as a ‘unique case history chronicling an episode of eighteenth-century intellectual culture’ at the moment when cataloguing systems and archival methodologies that remain familiar to us today were emerging in academic institutions (p. 147). He shows that evaluating Coleridge’s claims of working hard—taken dubiously by other critics and biographers—in light of the British system is to do a disservice to the contemporary climate in which Coleridge was participating: his ‘intellectual efforts’, van Woudenberg thinks, were ‘clearly the norm for foreign students within the constellation of an Arbeitsuniversität’ (p. 92). A significant part of these efforts was dedicated to attending seminars, the conversational (or, at least, oneversational) nature of which anticipated the culture that Coleridge cultivated in his Highgate rooms (Aherne, p. 30). Beyond these classes, though, Coleridge also immersed himself in Göttingen library’s research opportunities, using their philosophical, theological and historical collections to develop a ‘historical–critical methodology in the selection, evaluation, and assessment of primary material, historical context, and contemporary secondary sources’ that was at the cutting edge of humanistic research in this period (van Woudenberg, p. 158). As van Woudenberg concludes, Coleridge’s major achievement in the period was the stimulation of ‘a new path of investigation through the development of new methodologies and the new combination of subjects’ (pp. 219–20). The ‘true legacy of Göttingen’, van Woudenberg finds, was Coleridge’s discovery and translation of a ‘Humboldtian model’ that would come to characterise universities in the nineteenth century (p. 220).

Like van Woudenberg, Aherne suggests that Coleridge’s greatest achievements are the—often ‘illusory’ (p. 36)—residues he deposited in Western academic culture. Aherne, though, is more interested in Coleridge’s pedagogical legacy. Both authors share, too, the sense that, as Aherne nearly puts it, ‘writing about Coleridge’s influence is like trying to navigate a collection of labyrinths that have, for some inexplicable reason, all fallen in on each other whilst simultaneously retaining their original structure’ (pp. 3–4). Aherne’s string is based on the unravelling of Coleridge’s reputation: he argues that Coleridge became ‘the cause around which his supporters and beneficiaries could rally’ (p. 56). By contrast, he dismisses Coleridge’s detractors by asserting that, in attempting to ‘discredit [Coleridge’s] intellectual abilities […] they were advertising their own intellectual deficiencies’ (p. 63).
Aherne’s is a rich and comprehensive study with an ambitious scope. He does a magnificent job of pointing towards Coleridge’s widespread, if understated, intellectual influence in the century after his death. By drawing attention to figures already familiar to Coleridgean scholarship, such as Julius Hare and Thomas Carlyle, alongside less obvious figures—notably John Dewey, Shadworth Hodgson, I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot—Aherne paints a rich portrait of the legacy of what he calls Coleridge’s ‘intellectual vocation’ (p. 256). Coleridge’s theosophical prose works—especially Lay Sermon (1816), Aids to Reflection (1825) and On the Constitution of the Church and State (1829)—emerge as the key texts in Aherne’s reading. More surprising, perhaps, is the extent to which Aherne insinuates them as required reading for the intellectual attempting to navigate the twenty-first-century academic landscape. In quoting John Beer’s assessment of Aids to Reflection’s contemporary cultural value, Aherne also implies its significance to today’s lifestyle challenges: ‘to an age that was increasingly looking less for questioning minds than for voices to offer a note of assurance in difficult times’, Beer asserts, ‘this Coleridge, the man who appeared to have distilled a message for his times from his own restless thought and experience, had a particularly strong appeal’ (quoted in Aherne, p. 80).

Nevertheless, what Aherne outlines here is less an ‘intellectual cosmopolitanism’ than what he terms an ‘intellectual aristocracy’ (p. 242) centred on Oxbridge and London in Britain, and the East Coast Ivy League schools in America. Culture, here, equates to ‘internally supported intellectual power’ (p. 258). Aherne deftly demonstrates how Coleridgean thought penetrated these institutions and, the implication is, by extension both countries’ political structures. Further studies might develop from this one to explore Coleridge’s influence in other spheres: for instance, his effect on feminine circles—such as Charlotte Yonge’s Goslings (a society of which several of the Coleridge women were a part in the later nineteenth century)—would be fruitful ground for a rich extension of this work.

These books’ collective contribution is wider reaching than their individual parts, because both make the same fundamental case: that Coleridgean methodology underpins the tenets and politics of modern-day education. The training in ‘innovation and methods’ (van Woudenberg, p. 31) that Coleridge received in Göttingen would not become part of the British model for several more decades—not, in fact, until Coleridge’s own disciples introduced them. But, as van Woudenberg and Aherne each demonstrate, the Coleridgean methodological model goes beyond this. Underpinning it is Coleridge’s exposure to the tree-structure of the Göttingen Realkatalog, which, van Woudenberg posits, ‘anticipates [the structure] of modern computer filing systems’. Coleridge ‘understood the usefulness and practicality of such a catalogue in stimulating new entry points for research’ (p. 129), and this system is utilised in the notebooks’ revelation of systems of cross-referencing, cataloguing ideas according to subject (often in discrete notebooks for different purposes), and in ‘interlinking [...] sources to stimulate new paths of investigation’ (p. 167).
In the decades that intercede between van Woudenberg’s and Aherne’s respective periods of focus, Coleridge’s method developed. In Aherne’s reading, by Coleridge’s ‘Sage’ years, talking had replaced note-taking as the main output of the Coleridgean methodology: ‘Coleridge’s intellectual method was embodied in his voice; it needed no revision’ (p. 136). Although Coleridge was continually perplexed by his listeners’ perceptions of ‘Obscurity’ in his conversation and prose writings—in 1830 he wrote to H. F. Cary to ask for some ‘data’ on this phenomenon (p. 39)—reading Aherne alongside van Wouden­berg indicates that the monologue performed a similar cataloguing function to the notebooks in Coleridge’s earlier years: Aherne explains that talking ‘allowed [Coleridge] to make complex interactions and draw intriguing associations between what would otherwise have appeared unrelated (and unrelatable) fields of knowledge’ (p. 37). The upshot for Coleridge was that his ideas were given ‘room to breathe’; Aherne poetically writes that talking ‘promoted the diffuseness of an intellect that would otherwise collapse inwardly on itself’ (p. 39). But it also foregrounds the quest to bring together different subjects, and to promote interdisciplinary thinking just at the moment when the potential for a polymathic education was being undone.

The answer to Aherne’s central question—how does one become Coleridgean? (p. 280)—is, by these books’ approaches, straightforward enough to write: become multidisciplinary, and communicate this academic diversity to successive generations. Performing the adequate research to get to that stage, however, might take a lifetime of thought, reflection and (almost inevitably) procrastination. And that is no bad thing: as both these studies, indicate, Coleridge was nothing if not a collaborative thinker. Recognising the centrality of cooperation in Coleridgean thought helps to (re)situate Coleridge, and Coleridgean methodologies, as a locus of academic, archival and pedagogical developments in both the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries.

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