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978-0-521-19068-8 - *Idleness, Contemplation and the Aesthetic, 1750-1830*

Richard Adelman

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IDLENESS, CONTEMPLATION AND THE AESTHETIC, 1750–1830

Reconstructing the literary and philosophical reaction to Adam Smith's dictum that man is a labouring animal above and before all else, this study explores the many ways in which Romantic writers presented idle contemplation as the central activity in human life. By contrasting the British response to Smith's political economy with that of contemporary German Idealists, Richard Adelman also uses this consideration of the importance of idleness to Romantic aesthetics to chart the development of a distinctly British idealism in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Exploring the work of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Friedrich Schiller, William Cowper, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mary Wollstonecraft and many of their contemporaries, this study pinpoints a debate over human activity and capability taking place between 1750 and 1830, and considers its social and political consequences for the cultural theory of the early nineteenth century.

RICHARD ADELMAN is Lecturer in English at the University of Dundee.

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Abbreviations

‘Address’	S. T. Coleridge, ‘Address to a young Jack Ass & it’s [<i>sic</i>] tethered Mother’ in <i>Letters</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 142–3.
<i>Aesthetic</i>	F. Schiller, <i>On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters</i> , ed. E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
<i>Alton Locke</i>	C. Kingsley, <i>Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography</i> , ed. E. A. Cripps (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983);
<i>Biog.</i>	S. T. Coleridge, <i>Biographia Literaria</i> , ed. J. Engell and W. J. Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
<i>C&S</i>	S. T. Coleridge, <i>On the Constitution of Church and State</i> , ed. J. Colmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).
<i>Chrestomathia</i>	J. Bentham, <i>Chrestomathia</i> , ed. M. J. Smith and W. H. Burston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).
‘Coleridge’	A. L. Barbauld, ‘To Mr S. T. Coleridge’ in W. McCarthy and E. Kraft (eds.), <i>Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose</i> (Ormskirk: Broadview, 2002), pp. 142–3.
‘Effusion’	S. T. Coleridge, ‘Effusion xxxv’, in <i>The Complete Poems</i> , ed. W. Keach (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 85–6.
<i>Essay</i>	A. Ferguson, <i>An Essay on the History of Civil Society 1767</i> , ed. D. Forbes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966).
‘FM’	S. T. Coleridge, ‘Frost at Midnight’ in <i>Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose</i> , eds. N. Halmi, P. Magnuson and R. Modiano (London: W. W. Norton, 2004), pp. 120–3.

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List of abbreviations

- Letters* S. T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).
- Principles* A. Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1973).
- Short Residence* M. Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. J. Todd and M. Butler, 7 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1989), Vol. VI, pp. 237–348.
- Task* Cowper, William, *The Task, and Selected Other Poems*, ed. J. Sambrook (London: Longman, 1994).
- ‘Three years’ W. Wordsworth, ‘Three years she grew in sun and shower’ in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. De Selincourt, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 214–16.
- TMS* A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).
- WN* A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1976).
- Writings* J. Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. M. Božovič (London: Verso, 1995).
- Yeast* C. Kingsley, *Yeast: A Problem* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1976).