Religious diversity and ferment characterize the period that gave rise to Romanticism in England. It is generally known that many individuals who contributed to the new literatures of the late eighteenth century came from Dissenting backgrounds, but we nonetheless often underestimate the full significance of nonconformist beliefs and practices during this period. Daniel White provides a clear and useful introduction to Dissenting communities, focusing on Anna Barbauld and her familial network of heterodox “liberal” Dissenters whose religious, literary, educational, political, and economic activities shaped the public culture of early Romanticism in England. He goes on to analyze the roles of nonconformity within the lives and writings of William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey, offering a Dissenting genealogy of the Romantic movement.

DANIEL E. WHITE is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Toronto.
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2 “View of Barton Bridge,” where the Duke of Bridgewater’s Canal passed over the River Irwell, from John Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles round Manchester*. Reproduced by permission of the Library Company of Philadelphia 81

3 James Gillray, “Copenhagen House.” Reproduced by permission of the National Portrait Gallery 100


At the University of Pennsylvania, where this book began to take shape in the form of my doctoral dissertation, I was fortunate to find a remarkable group of mentors and fellow graduate students. Among those whose examples meant and continue to mean more to me than they could know, I would like to thank Stuart Curran, Toni Bowers, David DeLaura, Michael Gamer, Joe Farrell, Margreta deGrazia, and Peter Stallybrass for their generosity, spirit, and guidance. I have benefited greatly from the readings and suggestions of Alan Bewell, Pamela Clemit, Jeannine DeLombard, Markman Ellis, Tim Fulford, Gary Handwerk, Anne Janowitz, Jack Lynch, Jon Mee, and Anne Mellor, as well as Barbara Taylor and the members of the Gender and Enlightenment Collaborative Research Project. In the early stages of my research at the British Museum, I discovered a remarkable group of minds and friends in Sophie Carter, Will Fisher, Andrea Mackenzie, Phil Coogan, Frans De Bruyn, and Oz Frankl. With each passing year my admiration for the individuals who make up the Romanticist community deepens, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my love and esteem for Jeff Cox, Julie Kipp, Greg Kucich, Mark Lussier, Tilar Mazzeo, and Paul Youngquist. At the University of Toronto I am grateful for the support I consistently receive from my colleagues, especially Alan Bewell, Heather and Robin Jackson, Karen Weisman, Jeannine DeLombard, and Mark Levene. I have received material assistance from the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Puget Sound, the University of Toronto, the Connaught Fund, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Huntington Library and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Linda Bree and Maartje Scheltens of Cambridge University Press have been extremely supportive and helpful. I am indebted as well to the staffs of the British Library; Dr. Williams’ Library; the Senate House Library at the University of London; the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, the E. J. Pratt Library, and Robarts Library at the University of Toronto; the
Huntington Library; the New York Public Library; the Van Pelt Library, especially the Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, at the University of Pennsylvania; and the Library Company of Philadelphia.

Material from several chapters has appeared in print in earlier versions: “The ‘Joineriana’: Anna Barbauld, the Aikin Family Circle, and the Dissenting Public Sphere,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (Summer 1999): 511–33; “‘Properer for a Sermon’: Particularities of Dissent and Coleridge’s Conversational Mode,” *Studies in Romanticism* 40 (Summer 2001): 175–98 (by permission of the Trustees of Boston University); “‘With Mrs Barbauld it is different’: Dissenting Heritage and the Devotional Taste,” in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, edited by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (London: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 474–92. I am grateful for permission to reprint these materials here. Every effort has been made to secure necessary permissions to reproduce copyright material in this work, though in some cases it has proved impossible to trace copyright holders. If any omissions are brought to our notice, we will be happy to include appropriate acknowledgments in any subsequent edition.

The special place in my heart, and in these acknowledgments, is reserved for my exquisite Jeannine, who has read every word and remains my collaborator, competitor, colleague, and consummate companion.

This book is dedicated to my family of writers, musicians, and talkers.
Frequently cited texts

The following texts are commonly cited in the abbreviated form shown below:


### Frequently cited texts

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<th>Author and Title</th>
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You have refused us; and by so doing, you keep us under the eye of the public, in
the interesting point of view of men who suffer under a deprivation of their
rights. You have set a mark of separation upon us, and it is not in our power to
take it off, but it is in our power to determine whether it shall be a disgraceful
stigma or an honourable distinction. If, by the continued peaceableness of our
demeanour, and the superior sobriety of our conversation, a sobriety for which
we have not quite ceased to be distinguished; if, by our attention to literature,
and that ardent love of liberty which you are pretty ready to allow us, we deserve
esteem, we shall enjoy it. If our rising seminaries should excel in wholesome
discipline and regularity, if they should be the schools of morality, and yours,
unhappily, should be corrupted into schools of immorality, you will entrust us
with the education of your youth, when the parent, trembling at the profligacy
of the times, wishes to preserve the blooming and ingenuous child from the
degrading taint of early licentiousness. If our writers are solid, elegant, or
nervous, you will read our books and imbibe our sentiments, and even your
Preachers will not disdain, occasionally, to illustrate our morality. If we enlighten
the world by philosophical discoveries, you will pay the involuntary homage
due to genius, and boast of our names when, amongst foreign societies, you are
inclined to do credit to your country. If your restraints operate towards keeping
us in that middle rank of life where industry and virtue most abound, we shall
have the honour to count ourselves among that class of the community which
has ever been the source of manners, of population and wealth. If we seek for
fortune in the track which you have left most open to us, we shall increase your
commercial importance. If, in short, we render ourselves worthy of respect, you
cannot hinder us from being respected – you cannot help respecting us – and in
spite of all names of opprobrious separation, we shall be bound together by
mutual esteem and the mutual reciprocation of good offices.

“A disserter” (Anna Barbauld), from An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal
of the Corporation and Test Acts. London, Printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, St.
Paul’s Church-Yard. 1790. [Price One Shilling.]