

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge

Tim Milnes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## THE TRUTH ABOUT ROMANTICISM

How have our conceptions of truth been shaped by romantic literature? This question lies at the heart of this examination of the concept of truth both in romantic writing and in modern criticism. The romantic idea of truth has long been depicted as aesthetic, imaginative, and ideal. Tim Milnes challenges this picture, demonstrating a pragmatic strain in the writing of Keats, Shelley, and Coleridge in particular, which bears a close resemblance to the theories of modern pragmatist thinkers such as Donald Davidson and Jürgen Habermas. Romantic pragmatism, Milnes argues, was in turn influenced by recent developments within linguistic empiricism. This book will be of interest to readers of romantic literature, but also to philosophers, literary theorists, and intellectual historians.

TIM MILNES is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge

Tim Milnes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ROMANTICISM

*Founding editor*

PROFESSOR MARILYN BUTLER, *University of Oxford*

*General editor*

PROFESSOR JAMES CHANDLER, *University of Chicago*

*Editorial Board*

JOHN BARRELL, *University of York*

PAUL HAMILTON, *University of London*

MARY JACOBUS, *University of Cambridge*

CLAUDIA JOHNSON, *Princeton University*

ALAN LIU, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

JEROME MCGANN, *University of Virginia*

SUSAN MANNING, *University of Edinburgh*

DAVID SIMPSON, *University of California, Davis*

This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those 'great national events' that were 'almost daily taking place': the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanisation, industrialisation, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion, and literature were reworked in texts such as *Frankenstein* and *Biographia Literaria*; gender relations in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Don Juan*; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; poetic form, content, and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of comment or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of 'literature' and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars, on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

*For a complete list of titles published see end of book.*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats,  
Shelley, Coleridge

Tim Milnes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# THE TRUTH ABOUT ROMANTICISM

*Pragmatism and Idealism in  
Keats, Shelley, Coleridge*

TIM MILNES

*University of Edinburgh*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats,  
Shelley, Coleridge  
Tim Milnes  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521198073](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521198073)

© Tim Milnes 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without  
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Milnes, Tim.  
The truth about Romanticism : pragmatism and idealism in  
Keats, Shelley, Coleridge / Tim Milnes.  
p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Romanticism ; 83)  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19807-3

1. English poetry--19th century--History and criticism. 2. Romanticism--Great Britain.
3. Pragmatism in literature. 4. Idealism in literature. 5. Keats, John, 1795–1821--Criticism  
and interpretation. 6. Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 1792–1822--Criticism and interpretation.
7. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 1772–1834--Criticism and interpretation. I. Title. II. Series.

PR590.M54 2010

821'.709145--dc22

2010004396

ISBN 978-0-521-19807-3 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to  
in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such  
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats,  
Shelley, Coleridge

Tim Milnes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*To Michelle, with all my love*

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats,  
Shelley, Coleridge  
Tim Milnes  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

*Contents*

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page viii</i>
Introduction: The pragmatics of romantic idealism	i
1 Romanticising pragmatism: dialogue and critical method	15
2 Pragmatising romanticism: radical empiricism from Reid to Rorty	41
3 This living Keats: truth, deixis, and correspondence	66
4 An unremitting interchange: Shelley, elenchus, and the education of error	105
5 The embodiment of reason: Coleridge on language, logic, and ethics	145
<i>Conclusion</i>	189
<i>Notes</i>	192
<i>Bibliography</i>	228
<i>Index</i>	248

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19807-3 - The Truth About Romanticism: Pragmatism and Idealism in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge

Tim Milnes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## *Acknowledgements*

The bulk of this book was written during a sabbatical year generously granted by the University of Edinburgh and funded partly by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Its earliest, incondite ideas were licked into shape at conferences in Aberystwyth, Nottingham, and Bristol, and by colleagues in the Department of English Literature at Edinburgh. Later revisions were greatly assisted by the patient and thorough commentary of the two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press, and by the helpful oversight of James Chandler. Particular thanks are due to Liz Barry, Alex Benchimol, Liz Brown, Damian Walford Davies, Lesel Dawson, A. C. Grayling, Paul Hamilton, Sara Lodge, Susan Manning, Uttara Natarajan, Tom Paulin, Randall Stevenson, Jules Siedenburg, Samira Sheikh, Kerry Sinanan, Richard Marggraf Turley, Jane Wright, and Duncan Wu. Among my considerable non-academic obligations are those I owe to my parents, Les and Audrey Milnes. My largest single debt, however, is to the support and encouragement of my wife, Michelle Milnes, to whom I dedicate this book with love and gratitude.