

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## EARLY ROMANTICISM AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

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.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ROMANTICISM

*General editors*Professor Marilyn Butler, *University of Oxford*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, urbanization, industrialization, 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

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# EARLY ROMANTICISM AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

DANIEL E. WHITE



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, 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/9780521858953](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521858953)

© Daniel E. White 2006

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 2006

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

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

ISBN-13 978-0-521-85895-3 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-85895-X 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.

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Frequently cited texts</i>	xi
<i>Epigraph</i>	xiii
Introduction	I
1 “True Principles of Religion and Liberty”: liberal Dissent and the Warrington Academy	17
2 Anna Barbauld and devotional tastes: extempore, particular, experimental	34
3 The “ <i>Joineriana</i> ”: Barbauld, the Aikin family circle, and the Dissenting public sphere	66
4 Godwinian scenes and popular politics: Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and the legacies of Dissent	87
5 “ <i>Properer for a Sermon</i> ”: Coleridgean ministries	119
6 “A Saracenic mosque, not a Quaker meeting-house”: Southey’s <i>Thalaba</i> , Islam, and religious nonconformity	152
7 Conclusion	182
<i>Notes</i>	188
<i>Bibliography</i>	230
<i>Index</i>	256

*Illustrations*

1	“The Evolution of Old Dissent,” from Michael R. Watts, <i>The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution</i> . Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press	page 5
2	“View of Barton Bridge,” where the Duke of Bridgewater’s Canal passed over the River Irwell, from John Aikin, <i>A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles round Manchester</i> . Reproduced by permission of the Library Company of Philadelphia	81
3	James Gillray, “Copenhagen House.” Reproduced by permission of the National Portrait Gallery	100
4	“Toasts,” from <i>At a General Meeting of the London Corresponding Society, Held at the Globe Tavern Strand: On Monday the 20th Day of January, 1794</i> . Reproduced by permission of the British Library	105
5	“Canals, Rivers, and Roads,” from John Aikin, <i>A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles round Manchester</i> . Reproduced by permission of the Library Company of Philadelphia	121
6	“The Garden of Aloadin,” from William Hawkes Smith, <i>Essays in Design . . . Illustrative of the Poem of Thalaba the Destroyer</i> . Reproduced by permission of the British Library	172

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Acknowledgments*

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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

*Acknowledgments*

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:

<i>CL</i>	Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> , ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–71).
<i>CN</i>	William Godwin, <i>The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin</i> , gen. ed. Mark Philp, 8 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1992).
<i>CPB</i>	Robert Southey, <i>Southey's Common-Place Book</i> , ed. John Wood Warter, 4 vols. (London, 1849–51).
<i>CW</i>	S. T. Coleridge, <i>The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> , gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1971–).
<i>Evenings</i>	Anna Letitia Barbauld and John Aikin, <i>Evenings at Home</i> , 6 vols. (London, 1792–96).
<i>LC</i>	R. Southey, <i>The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey</i> , ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey, 6 vols. (London, 1849–50).
<i>NL</i>	R. Southey, <i>New Letters of Robert Southey</i> , ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).
<i>PALB</i>	A. L. Barbauld, <i>The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld</i> , ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).
<i>PPW</i>	W. Godwin, <i>Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin</i> , gen. ed. Mark Philp, 7 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1993).
<i>Selections</i>	R. Southey, <i>Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey</i> , ed. John Wood Warter, 4 vols. (London, 1856).

xii	<i>Frequently cited texts</i>
<i>SPP</i>	A. L. Barbauld, <i>Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose</i> , ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview, 2002).
<i>STC</i>	S. T. Coleridge, <i>Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems</i> , ed. William Keach (London: Penguin, 1997).
<i>Taylor</i>	William Taylor, <i>A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich . . . Containing his Correspondence of Many Years with the late Robert Southey, Esq.</i> , ed. J. W. Robberds, 2 vols. (London, 1843).
<i>Works</i>	A. L. Barbauld, <i>The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld. With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin</i> , ed. Lucy Aikin, 2 vols. (London, 1825).
<i>WMW</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft</i> , gen. ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1989).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-85895-3 - Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent

Daniel E. White

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Epigraph*

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 DISSENTER” (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.]