THE ROMANTIC TAVERN

The tavern is widely acknowledged as central to the cultural and political life of Britain, yet widely misunderstood. Ian Newman provides the first sustained account of one of the primary institutions of the late eighteenth-century public sphere. The tavern was a venue not only for serious political and literary debate, but also for physical pleasure – the ludic, libidinal, and gastronomic enjoyments with which late Georgian public life was inextricably entwined. This study focuses on the architecture of taverns and the people who frequented them, as well as the artistic forms – drinking songs, ballads, Anacreontic poetry, and toasting – with which the tavern was associated. By examining the culture of conviviality that emerged alongside other new forms of sociability in the second half of the eighteenth century, *The Romantic Tavern* argues for the importance of conviviality as a complex new form of sociability shaped by masculine political gathering and mixed-company entertainments.

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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; and 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 commentary 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 University Press, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

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For Kate, Evie, and Nesta
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Acknowledgments

The most common reaction I receive when telling people I research taverns is their volunteering to help with fieldwork. My standard response has been to point out that most of the taverns I consider no longer exist, that the research happens in libraries and archives, and it may not be quite as much fun as it sounds. But the fact of the matter is that I have had more fun researching and writing this book than accords with the usual image of academic pointy-headed severity. This is due to the generous enthusiasm of mentors, colleagues, librarians, archivists, friends, and other co-conspirators I’ve met along the way.

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Abbreviations

Add. MSS Additional Manuscripts
BL British Library
BM British Museum
HO Home Office Papers
LCS London Corresponding Society
LMA London Metropolitan Archive
n.p. No page numbers
*OED* Oxford English Dictionary
TS National Archive Treasury Solicitor’s Papers