

Tim Fulford, *Romantic Poetry and Literary Coteries: The Dialect of the Tribe*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. 264. £55. ISBN 9781137518897.

Tim Fulford and Michael E. Sinatra, eds., *The Regency Revisited*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. 207. £58. ISBN 9781137543370.

Romantic Poetry and Literary Coteries examines groups of writers in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries whose members influenced each other's work and in doing so impacted the development of Romanticism. Fulford describes these coteries as 'intense friendship groups' (1) comprising poets, editors, essayists, and reviewers, and illustrates throughout his book the new insight gained by viewing the evolution of poetic style as the result of a group's rather than an individual's development. At the forefront of his theory is the importance of allusion within the works of the coteries he discusses.

The first group Fulford examines, and the one he gives most attention to, is what he calls the Bristol coterie. Operating mainly in the 1790s, its primary members were Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Mary Robinson, and William Cowper. According to Fulford, this group created a common, allusion-based verse style that they used in their works to criticise what they saw as London's 'commodifying capitalism' (23).

The subject of the first chapter is Mary Robinson. Fulford pays particular attention to Robinson's role in directing the other Bristol poets' attention towards the problem of 'reduction of people to things' (24) in the form of slavery and the commodification of women. In the following chapter he analyses Southey's and Coleridge's influence on each other, specifically in the case of the writing processes of *Thalaba the Destroyer* and 'Kubla Khan'. Speculating on which of these poems was written first, Fulford considers the implications of each possibility on the construction of Romantic orientalism, as well as our understanding of the relationship between the two poets. In Chapter 3 he explores the use of allusion as a means of self-censoring, using as an example Coleridge's 'The Pains of Sleep'. Fulford argues the poem disguises hints to both Coleridge's political views at the time of composition and his use of opium, which would have brought him public condemnation if revealed openly. In Chapter 4 he discusses the genre of colonial romance and its origins in the works of the Bristol coterie, particularly those of William Lisle Bowles and Robert Southey. Similar to the discussion on Southey and Coleridge in Chapter 2, Fulford shows how the two poets impacted each other in a circular fashion throughout their careers.

In the second part of the book Fulford turns his attention to the coteries of the labouring-class poets Robert Bloomfield and John Clare. First to be examined is Bloomfield. In Chapter 5 Fulford argues that due to his isolation from other men of letters, Bloomfield was forced to create a coterie for himself through references and allusions to the poets he wished to be associated with, such as Erasmus Darwin, Samuel Butler, and William Wordsworth. Similarly, in Chapter 6 he analyses the poems written by John Clare during the asylum period, which contain several allusions to poets Clare had never met, such as Cowper and Lord Byron. In these two chapters Fulford expands his definition of a literary coterie from the friendship groups of the first part to include unilateral associations based on allusions to admired fellow poets.

In the third and final part of the book Fulford discusses what is known as the Cockney School of London-based writers, including Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb and Peter G. Patmore. In Chapter 7 he focuses on the magazine essay. Again, the significance of

allusion in the Romantic writers' work is explored from a slightly different angle, this time by examining 'the dropped, or almost dropped name' (190) in the group's literary output. This refers to a practice of hinting at well-known acquaintances without directly naming them, which also allows the audience to feel connected to the writers by successfully identifying the names behind these hints. In the last chapter Fulford analyses biblical allusions in the works of the Cockney coterie, with a special focus on Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*.

The Regency Revisited, a collection of essays by various contributors, sets out to explore the short era of the Regency, and to consider it as a separate literary period within the larger framework of Romanticism. As the editors themselves point out, this is a somewhat innovative approach to the classification of literature. The theme of periodization is taken up by Jonathan Sachs in the first essay, which examines the way historical periods are distinguished from or within each other retrospectively.

The person of the Prince Regent forms a part of the backdrop for the readings presented in this volume, and several of the contributors consider his impact on the literature of the period. In addition to the Regent himself, several writers' roles in the formation of Regency literature are discussed from more than one angle. Jane Austen is the subject of two essays at the beginning of the book, both of which examine the way contemporary social and political questions are reflected in literature. In Chapter 3 Joel Faflak analyses *Pride and Prejudice* together with Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab* as allegories for the nation's hopes for the future and for social stability, and in Chapter 4 Robert Miles links *Mansfield Park* to the political scandal of the so-called Berkeley peerage affair of 1811.

However, the names that come up most frequently in this volume are those of Leigh Hunt and Robert Southey, particularly in relation to each other. In Chapter 6 Jeffrey N. Cox analyses Hunt's newspaper the *Examiner* with a special focus on the year 1813 and the way Hunt established a position in opposition to Southey, drawing 'the battle lines between two schools of poetry' (91) several years before the Cockney School articles published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. In Chapter 7 Michael E. Sinatra examines the ways in which Hunt used theatrical criticism to comment on political debates, particularly to criticise the Prince Regent, and in Chapter 8 Michael Gamer brings the focus back to the year 1813, this time from the perspective of Southey and the beginning of this career as the Poet Laureate. Gamer considers Southey's attempts at using his poetry to elevate the position, which had been turned down by Walter Scott and was thought by many to restrict a poet's creativity with its demands of loyalty to the crown. Greg Kucich returns to the topic of Hunt and Southey in Chapter 9, where he examines their relationship through the antagonism displayed in Hunt's writings, as well as the careful admiration mixed in these attacks.

Another prevailing topic in the book is the role of cultural artefacts and value judgements in the Regency society. In Chapter 5 Tilar J. Mazzeo questions the distinction between high and low culture in this period by examining William Blake's early career as an engraver, and suggests little difference was perceived at the time between fine art and commercial, decorative art. Similarly, in Chapter 12 Sophie Thomas analyses the museum as an emerging institution at the turn of the century, and the impact made by specific exhibitions in London.

The last three essays offer perspectives on the Regency period through the examination of seemingly minor instances that reflect the broader ambience of the period. In Chapter 10 Tim Fulford argues that Humphry Davy's visit to France during the war was indicative of the Prince Regent's failure to 'command the loyalty of British men of genius' (137), and in Chapter 11 Andrew Stauffer presents a case for the authenticity of the attribution of the lesser-known poem 'When I left Thy Shores, O Naxos' to Lord Byron. In the last chapter John Gardner analyses the collaboration between Pierce Egan, William Hone and George Cruik-

shank in the production of Egan's *Life in London*, a book dedicated to the former Regent – now King – whom both Hone and Cruikshank had mocked in their past works.

While *Romantic Poetry and the Literary Coteries* illustrates the various ways in which allusion was used in the works of early nineteenth-century writers, *The Regency Revisited* examines the literary culture that evolved around the ubiquitous presence of the Prince Regent during the same era. Each of these volumes provides an original point of view to the complex network of collaborations and influences that moulded the culture and literature of the Romantic period.

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