

Jonathan Cutmore, ed. *John Murray's Quarterly Review, Letters 1807-1843*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019. Pp. 395. £100. ISBN 9781789941909.

Of the 127 letters edited and published by Jonathan Cutmore in *John Murray's Quarterly Review Letters 1807-1843*, which covers the period of John Murray II's involvement, only 7 letters have appeared in print before in either full or excerpted form. The compilation includes correspondence to and from William Gifford, John Taylor Coleridge, and John Gibson Lockhart to important correspondents including Sir Walter Scott. The value of putting this correspondence, compiled and edited with great focus, is in and of itself a significant contribution to the study of Romantic print culture of the early nineteenth century. The significance of the *Quarterly Review* (QR) as a cultural artefact is an important part of Cutmore's introduction to this book. He summarises in the introduction that, to the minds of QR's contemporary readers,

The journal did not merely reflect conservative positions but formulated and modified them, to the point of affecting government policy and legislation. They believed too that its reviews determined literary careers and the sale of books.¹

Investigating the reality of these perceptions then becomes the core concern of Cutmore's detailed 'Introduction'. With a quick acknowledgement of his sources (National Library of Scotland, John Murray Archive), Cutmore proceeds to explore how far government policy or literary reputations might have actually been affected by the articles and reviews published in *Quarterly Review*. He does so through a detailed 'prosological' study of QR's readership, circulation, and contemporary reviews recorded in other periodicals. The study of QR's early readership is fascinating, covering a sample of 500 individual readers along with individual contributors. These individuals are subdivided through various demographic details, including addresses, occupations, and education, presented in insightful tables to give the modern reader of Cutmore's book a relative understanding of the relevance and impact of QR on early nineteenth-century Britain. Through his detailed analysis, Cutmore establishes that QR did not try to create an audience for itself by imagining an ideal reader, but rather addressed a clear demographic of willing readers, most of whom shared opinions with the editors and contributors of QR.

Cutmore also supplies a short insight into the QR's management under John Murray, who's minimal influence in the initial years of William Gifford's editorship transformed into a greater role by the end of his lifetime when the journal was helmed by John Gibson Lockhart. The complexity and shifts in QR's political positions under John Murray's management is also highlighted in the introduction, which (at sixty pages) is dense and comprehensive, even if it is at times reliant on emphasising similar ideas. Cutmore's fascination with the theoretical aspects of the research, including the possibilities and limitations of the methodologies employed (notably prosology, Jon Klancher and Jorg Neuheiser), can trigger interesting insights beyond the confines of QR. Although the publication of correspondence and personal writing including diaries and daybooks have been a regular feature of Romantic-era scholarship, a book such as Cutmore's, which collects and reproduces correspondence of a single publication, with an accompanying study appears unique.

The detailed scholarship and the insightfulness of the introduction also flows into the well-footnoted letters themselves, which are relayed with an emphasis on 'textual accuracy'. Cutmore claims that such devotion to 'textual accuracy' includes misspellings as well as

¹ Cutmore, p. 8.

intentional blank spaces and line-breaks, although marginalia unrelated to *QR* has been omitted. This is an understandable decision from an editorial perspective. However, some readers may find cause to quibble with this, as the marginalia omitted would likely include those from Sir Walter Scott and J.G. Lockhart, whose marginalia have elicited independent academic interest in the past.

Cutmore, however, has provided much to keep readers happy despite this, including a full list of every issue of *QR* from February 1809 to May 1843 with explanatory notes in the appendix. Cutmore also has a useful system of detailed cross-referencing between the various sections of the book, which is helpful for navigating this kind of work. The Letters themselves are divided into seven phases, which coincide with important phases of *QR*'s evolution and history, making this a book that is accessible to readers still unfamiliar with *QR*'s history. The footnotes to the letters also gloss important contextual information, including key debates and historical events that are referred to in the body of the letters, which aid in engaging with the epistolatory material more effectively.

This book will therefore stand out, in time, to both new and expert readers for the sheer novelty of finding so much correspondence, historical information, and scholarly insight in a single volume about such an important cultural artefact of Romantic print culture.

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