
In the 1805 version of *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth emphatically addresses Samuel Taylor Coleridge as ‘Friend!’ several times (Carlson, p. 226). As Julia S. Carlson notes in *Romantic Marks and Measures: Wordsworth’s Poetry in Fields of Print*, many contemporary readers of the poem do not encounter the exclamation marks in the 1805 version because the Norton Critical Edition, which remains one of the standard editions of the poem, silently removes them from the text. The Norton thus presents a more equanimous Wordsworth, one offering a mature and measured depiction of the growth of his philosophic mind. Yet, erasing the exclamation mark elides the extent to which Wordsworth’s literary endeavour was bound up in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates concerning the presentation and purpose of poetry. In her compelling revisionist analysis of Wordsworth work, Carlson elucidates the ways in which the exclamation marks enable Wordsworth to collapse the physical space between himself and Coleridge, illustrate Wordsworth’s evolving attitudes concerning punctuation and elocution, and explain how Wordsworth’s invocation was part of a larger project of constructing British identity using blank verse—a form of poetry once mocked by Wordsworth’s contemporaries as unpoetic. Carlson’s careful readings of *The Prelude* and many of Wordsworth’s other poems properly situate—in some instances, for the first time—Wordsworth as a poet shaped by, and shaping, a field witnessing radical aesthetic and paradigm shifts.

The virtue of Carlson’s book lies primarily in its New Historicist recovery of fields of print that informed—and were informed by—Wordsworth’s poetic endeavours. As Carlson contends, ‘Wordsworth’s poems were written and read amidst new practices of measuring and marking, and of rendering measures and marks in print, that reconfigured topographic and typographic fields and brought verse into heightened visibility and meter into national importance’ (pp. 8–9). Tracking these shifts reveals a host of un(der)studied figures whose work helped shape the poet Wordsworth, including travel guidebook innovator Peter Crosthwaite, Ordnance Surveyor Colonel William Mudge and elocutionists Thomas Sheridan and John Walker—to name a few. These figures reveal how ideological revolutions in seemingly disparate fields such as travel guides, cartography and elocution found their way into Wordsworth’s work. Many of Wordsworth’s seemingly radical claims about the ‘real language of men’ in his famous ‘Preface’, for example, were products of his careful reading of debates concerning elocution and its connection to British identity (p. 182). The picture of Wordsworth that emerges from Carlson’s work is one of a poet deeply concerned with—even profoundly anxious about—the efficacy of language and its ability to convey space, place and (national) identity.

*Romantic Marks and Measures* accentuates its expansive New Historicist analyses of the period with brilliant close readings of Wordsworth’s poetry
that rival those of the redoubtable Christopher Ricks and Susan Wolfson. Carlson’s discussion of Wordsworth’s ‘Friend!’ is one example of her ability to tease out the historical forces informing Wordsworth’s poetry. Her reading of the Simplon Pass episode is another. Carlson contends that Wordsworth and his friend Robert Jones lost their way in Simplon in part because cartographers had yet to establish a unified theory for rendering three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional spaces. The maps of Simplon Pass ‘reveal the lack, when Wordsworth was traveling and writing, of any one agreed code for the cartographic representation of space’ (p. 66). The failure at Simplon Pass caused Wordsworth to shift the language he used to describe his poetic development, turning ‘away from the kind of self that can be readily imaged on a map toward the kind of self of which geometry, with its claim to represent the infinite, is a better emblem’ (p. 70). In other words, Wordsworth’s problematic encounter with a real map caused him to rethink how he mapped himself and his growth in The Prelude and elsewhere. The book offers similarly impressive close readings of ‘The Brothers’, ‘Michael. A Pastoral Poem’ and The Excursion. Carlson enriches our understanding of fields of print that influenced Wordsworth without losing sight of the poet’s individual artistic achievements.

Romantic Marks and Measures is a well-written book—but it is also quite diffuse. The book itself feels like two distinct books (Chapters 1–3 and 4–7) forcibly bound together by an awkward ‘Interchapter’ that does little to meaningfully unite the two sections. At times, the book also delves more deeply than necessary into the fields of print it sees informing Wordsworth’s work: Carlson’s seeming obsession with the finer points on hachures, for instance, would have benefitted from editing for clarity. The book is likely too dense and convoluted for many undergraduate students and non-academics interested in Wordsworth’s work or Romanticism more generally. Most surprising, however, is the final chapter, which relegates Wordsworth to the margins in favour of John Thelwall, whom the book lauds for democratizing the language of blank verse in a way that the more ‘conservative’ Wordsworth never did (p. 261). The book, premised on the power of Wordsworth’s poetry to help shape national identity, thus ends with a whimper as Thelwall’s ‘therapoetics’ strangely correct Wordsworth’s aristocratic blindness (p. 279). Wordsworth’s lasting influence on Matthew Arnold and on notions of British nationalism would have made for a more appropriate and cohesive end. Perhaps in challenging Wordsworth’s understanding of space, the book also expects us to challenge our own. Carlson’s sweeping focus and varied interests might be as much a challenge to how we perform and present scholarship as it is our understanding of Wordsworth’s art and its impact.

New and seasoned readers of Wordsworth’s work will find a great deal to enjoy and appreciate here. Carlson’s unconventional and daring book deserves and rewards careful reading and is sure to inspire new studies of how several fields of print influenced other Romantic authors. Perhaps it will also inspire new readings of Wordsworth’s lesser-known poetry, such as Ecclesiastical Sketches—a collection of poems Wordsworth purportedly conceived while surveying land.
In either case, *Romantic Marks and Measures* has put Carlson and her fresh approach to reading Wordsworth on the map for years to come.

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**Treading new paths over familiar ground**, Talissa J. Ford’s *Radical Romantics: Prophets, Pirates and the Space Beyond Nation* explores the notion of nation through those who bend and break its ‘literal or figurative boundaries’ (p. 2). Though its title may sound ambitious, Ford traces a clear and concise line between the real pirate of the early eighteenth century, the imagined pirates of Byron’s works and the religious ‘prophets’ of the early nineteenth century (p. 67). Through this lens, the text presents an original and intriguing argument about the concepts of nationality, identity and gender in the Romantic period. Whilst, as Ford identifies in her introduction, there have been a number of critical studies (such as Linda Colley’s 1992 work *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*), *Radical Romantics* is ‘a book about what is beyond the map’, which aims to set its self apart by ‘rethinking the British Romantic period through such non-national concepts: beyond territory, beyond borders, beyond maps’. Ford states that titular pirates and prophets ‘revel the fragility of national identity and irrevocably complicate attempts to territorialise the state’ (p. 8). Able to exist and function outside of, or indeed often in opposition to, Ford argues that these figures presented both a physical and ideological threat to the stability of the nation.

*Radical Romantics: Prophets, Pirates and the Space Beyond Nation* is certainly an eye-catching title; as its contents suggest, both the pirate and the prophet have a long history of capturing the imagination of British society. The first chapter ‘It is Not Amiss to Speak of his Beard’ (referencing a description of the infamous pirate captain known as Blackbeard in Captain Charles Johnson’s 1724 *A General History of Pyrates*) explores the way in which real piracy, and those who committed it, were thought of and written about in the first decades of the eighteenth century. During the so called ‘Golden Age of Piracy’, the chapter argues, the pirate ship—‘not only multinational but multi-ethical’—was
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