

REVIEW  
Bigger Maps:  
Redrawing the Intellectual Boundaries

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Paul Keen

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**Jon Klancher**

*Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age*

CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2013

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**Noah Heringman**

*Sciences of Antiquity: Romantic Antiquarianism, Natural History, and Knowledge Work*

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☞ WHEN I WAS CHANGING PLANES on my way to a conference at the Huntington Library a couple of years ago, an advertisement caught my eye. Its slogan was “You’re going to need a bigger map.” I don’t remember what the ad was for—an airline perhaps, or some sort of telecommunications service. But their world was growing, and I was being invited to be part of it. What struck me was that, like so many effective ads, it was sending mixed messages that were exciting and vaguely threatening at the same time. Someone’s world was expanding; it was becoming bigger and better than ever for those who knew their way around it (those who had the most up-to-date maps), but even more daunting for those who did not. I was being invited to be part of this larger, more complicated world and subtly reminded that the ability to adapt to these changes (to know which map I would need, or even how to acquire it) was one more way of telling the difference between those in the know and those who were already obsolete. Pressed for time and feeling increasingly at odds with my carry-on luggage, I did not pause to take a photo of it. Afterward, I wished I had. It was one of

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those spots of time, a throwaway momentary experience, insignificant when it happened, that resonated more strongly in retrospect.

Over the two days of the conference—a discussion of sites of sociability in the Romantic age—it struck me that, in many ways, the slogan encapsulated everything that we were talking about. And this was doubly true, both as a description of what it meant during that period to stay abreast of the changing cultural and political currents, and of our own critical analysis of those efforts. Ideas about sociability had long functioned as a highly coveted mark of distinction—a sign of inclusion within the polite classes and proof of immunity from the vulgar herds below—but like so many other things, the codes that defined sociability had become more complex, more highly mediated, and more hotly contested. Again and again, writing from the period registers this anxious sense of needing a bigger map. The most established cultural coordinates had begun to seem obsolete; broader notions of social connectivity were emerging. Modern urban life offered an unprecedented range of public venues for entertainment and instruction, and the ease with which these could be accessed fostered a hybrid social world that complicated established class hierarchies. It could all be a bit overwhelming, and for those who did not have the right maps, the judgments involved could be treacherous. Late eighteenth-century Britain remained one of the most polite and most vicious ages ever, as Addison had famously declared in the *Spectator* at the outset of the century. Novels such as Frances Burney's *Evelina* registered both the delights and the perils of this new social order. Periodicals of all kinds, from the monthly reviews to the endless single-essay periodicals, dwelt on it with stubborn regularity.

This sense of an expanding world is mirrored in recent theoretical trends within literary and cultural history. Energized by the materialist priorities of book history, we have become more attuned to the formative influence of the legal, commercial, and technological infrastructure that enabled different forms of literary production. We are inclined to think of literature in sociological terms, as a cultural field composed of a complex and sometimes unstable network of relations between literary producers (authors, editors, translators), consumers (readers, collectors, borrowers, reviewers), and people in the trade. And we have become more aware of the ways in which these dynamics were shaped by broader institutional developments in such areas as education and libraries, bookstores and reading clubs. Our critical approaches have increasingly been organized by this sense of the complexity and the messiness of the cultural landscape in precisely the ways the canonizing impulse of the Great Authors tradition had managed to keep at bay. Today, it is the messiness that interests us: the direct and indirect influence of changes within the wider field of cultural production that we came to think of as literature, tensions between competing ideas about what counted as knowledge and what kinds of authority it should have, and the broader impact of the clash between social perspectives and value systems, all of which were colored by Scottish Enlightenment thinkers' efforts to develop a coherent sense of what it meant to be part of a modern, commercial nation. As the discussions that animated the conference on sites of sociability foregrounded in often dramatic ways, we have been forced to

develop new maps—more encompassing and more nuanced—of this messy cultural landscape within which the myriad forms of cultural expression that constitute the focus of our critical analyses were rooted. And as the ad implies, that cartographic challenge remains a work in progress.

One of the enduring attractions of the Romantic period is the extraordinary degree to which this sense of change colored virtually every aspect of life. This is broadly true of all historical eras, of course. But if this is true of the past generally, the perception of change must have been especially acute during the great revolutionary epoch that witnessed the execution of a king and the invention of the steam engine, the unraveling of the Enlightenment and the acceleration of industrialism, the beginnings of the modern university system and the emergence of our own disciplinary map. And these changes fascinate us in part because they resonate so profoundly with our own struggles and preoccupations. Our interest in the ways in which critics in this period responded to these challenges, which has in turn been quickened by the extent to which they resonate with similar challenges within the academy today, has generated a number of important recent books that remind us of how sophisticated many of these interventions were, and just what was at stake.



Jon Klancher's *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age*, which ranks as one of the most ambitious and illuminating of recent studies, explores these dynamics by focusing on the emerging "geography of knowledge production taking form between 1795 and 1830, . . . in which the great academies and societies, even the universities of England and Scotland, would have to be realigned in light of a new entrant into their sphere, the arts-and-sciences Institutions originating in London" (44). One indicator of these institutions' enormous impact was the speed with which they emerged. The Royal Institution opened its doors in 1800, followed soon after by the British Institution (1805), the London Institution (1806), the Surrey and Russell Institutions (1808), and the Metropolitan Institution (1823). Each was associated with a particular demographic—the Royal with the fashionable classes, the Surrey and the London with Dissenters, and the Russell with a professional audience—but collectively they were redrawing the map in ways that forced virtually every major thinker to respond. Their prominence was all the greater because turn-of-the-century London remained the only major European capital without a university and because of the skill with which these institutions boosted their various activities (most famously in the lectures they hosted but also their impressive reading rooms and libraries) with a strong presence in print. This did not mean that their presence was noncontroversial. Robert Southey may have enthused that "Institutions can new model our nature" after reading a book of Quaker history in 1806, but Coleridge was less convinced (10). The revised version of "Fears in Solitude" (1817) contained new lines lamenting the ways in which "All individual dignity and power" has been "Engulfed in Courts, Committees, Institutions, / Associations and Societies" (28). Whether the new

arts-and-sciences institutions were being celebrated or denounced, few doubted that these institutions had played a major role in redrawing the map of British culture. And few had done more to contribute to this effect than Coleridge himself.

The institutes are best remembered by Romantic literary historians as the venues of memorable lectures by the likes of Coleridge and William Hazlitt, but as important as these lecture series were, both for the spectators who flocked to them and as an element of literary history, they do not in themselves reflect the larger role played by institutions in promoting “the arts and sciences,” and in doing so, helping to change the very meaning of that phrase. The phrase itself was not new—Ephraim Chambers had discussed it at length in the preface to his 1728 *Cyclopaedia*—but as Klancher demonstrates, it was gaining fresh importance in ways that were bound up with the changing intellectual landscape of early nineteenth-century Britain. Framing his study of these changes in terms of a question that has become increasingly central to Romantic studies in recent years—“Was this still Enlightenment?”—Klancher offers a nuanced response:

In their ordering and disordering of knowledges, the Institution world and its many participants could adapt the Enlightenment legacy only by transforming its matrix of disciplines, media, and modes of public outreach into a wholly renegotiated landscape of Romantic-age practices and spaces. (7–8)

*Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences* is divided into two sections. The first section explores the ways in which the emergence of these institutions helped to redraw the map of British intellectual life, in part by changing every aspect of the phrase “arts and sciences.” Following this discussion of both the initiatives and the tensions that characterized such developments, the second section narrows its focus to concentrate on changing ideas about “the literary” within the new cultural landscape.

One of the many strengths of the book is the skill with which Klancher interweaves unexpected historical details with a sense of the larger dynamics that were part of these changes. Combining careful attention to specific texts, individuals, and events with a theoretically sophisticated sense of these wider implications, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences* gains much of its force from the frequently unexpected perspectives that it brings to them. After sketching out the longer historical context of ideas about institutions generally, from Daniel Defoe’s celebration of projectors (visionary but sometimes dubious cultural entrepreneurs) to the Enlightenment’s more gradualist approach, Klancher turns to the early nineteenth century—the age of the great arts-and-sciences institutions—by engaging with that least Romantic of figures: the new breed of administrator that was a crucial part of the rise of these institutions. Figuring prominently was the curious and ultimately short-lived partnership between Thomas Bernard, an Anglican evangelical founder of over twenty charitable, welfare, and philanthropic institutions, and another Tory reformer concerned with educational plans for the lower orders, Benjamin Thompson, known after 1791 as Count Rumford. Together, they teamed up with Joseph Banks “to launch a new project which would

bring the latest scientific and technological know-how to London's most educable workers, mechanics, and artisans by building a metropolitan institution for advanced technical education on a scale never seen in England" (60). The Royal Institution, as it would come to be known, would provide hands-on instruction on the latest machines, including James Watt and Matthew Boulton's steam engine. It was an extraordinary plan, but it failed almost before it began. Watt and Boulton decided not to cooperate, and the wealthy aristocrats whom Banks had persuaded to fund the institute grew nervous about the idea of educating workers.

The details of the fallout remain sketchy, but the end result is well known; with Rumford's departure, Bernard changed course radically, shifting the Royal Institution away from its educational imperative and converting it into the form in which it would be remembered: extravagant scientific displays for the fashionable classes. Working quietly from the sidelines, Bernard promoted a range of lecturers, including Humphry Davy on science, Sydney Smith on moral philosophy, and Coleridge and Thomas Frognall Dibdin on literary history. Of all of these, Dibdin may have been the most curious. Bernard had initially chosen Dibdin to give a ten-lecture series designed to draw attention to the Royal Institution, though he followed these up with twenty-two lectures on "English Literature" in 1805–7. As Klancher points out, "no two versions of English literary history could have been less alike" than Dibdin's lectures and the lectures on English literary history that Coleridge would give at the Royal in early 1808. (Coleridge had attended the last of Dibdin's while preparing his own.) Whereas Coleridge offered a memorable account of the power and originality of English poetry, Dibdin's description of literary history focused exclusively on the books themselves. Dibdin's extraordinary rise and fall ("famous, notorious, and then dead broke") offers an illuminating window onto the changing contours of this cultural landscape (93). More than any of his contemporaries, Dibdin straddled the chasm between a new scientific approach to the history of books that was becoming known as bibliography and "bibliography's garish twin, the notorious and volatile Bibliomania of the Romantic age" (86). As Klancher points out, in their "more extreme and disorderly practices," the bibliomaniacs became "perhaps the nineteenth century's most unwanted specialists in the instability of the book itself, pursuing insights into codex culture (in their own significantly crazed ways) that today's more disciplined book history has only recently begun to recuperate" (87–88).

This changing landscape, whose new contours were in so many ways defined by an evolving understanding of the relations between the arts and sciences, was in turn powerfully shaped by definitional shifts within each of these categories, and as historians such as Simon Schaffer have demonstrated, this was every bit as true of the sciences as it was of the arts. Changes within and between these forms of knowledge were deeply entangled, but not in any easily resolved manner. The Romantic poets may have dreamed of a "grand synthesis" between the two, but as Klancher emphasizes, this did not answer "the difficult question of how knowledges differentiate or how cultural and knowledge fields mutually constitute one another—less as some 'grand synthesis' or interdisciplinary machine than as a sometimes crazy-quilt assemblage of unevenly

developed crystallizations” (157). Klancher approaches these tensions from the perspective of debates within the sciences by way of two main texts: Richard Carlile’s 1821 *An Address to Men of Science*, written from a jail cell in Dorchester; and Charles Lyell’s article entitled “Scientific Institutions,” published in the 1826 *Quarterly Review*. Carlile’s pamphlet not only lamented the political conservatism of new scientific leaders such as Davy but also registered a powerful sense of just how radically “the knowledge game [had] changed,” from the natural philosophy of eighteenth-century scientists such as Joseph Priestley to a new mode of scientific authority based on “the rise of modern, far more autonomous disciplines” (129, 128). Carlile’s main concern was to forge some kind of politically effective relation between these new forms of scientific authority and the figure of the scientist as a public authority capable of addressing political issues. Lyell, on the other hand, was principally concerned to trace Britain’s scientific progress back to its institutional causes based on a complex, triple-layered analysis founded on a set of homologies: between disciplinary evolution, as the sciences become increasingly internally differentiated; evolutionary processes within plants and animals; and parallel geopolitical processes. And for Lyell, as for so many of his contemporaries, the rise of the new arts-and-sciences institutions was a crucial element of this evolutionary story. In doing so, however, Lyell produced “an evolutionary narrative of ‘arts and sciences’ almost magically free of social contradiction, public controversy, political struggle, or the complex and contingent relationship between ‘knowledge’ and ‘practices’ of many kinds” (148).

The central figure in these debates is Coleridge, a poet and philosopher, critic of the new institutions and one of their greatest lecturers, conservative and leading proponent of the sorts of new maps that could help to make sense of this post-Enlightenment world. Klancher, taking his cue from John Stuart Mill’s related essays on Coleridge and Jeremy Bentham as the two great but diametrically opposed thinkers of the age, offers a fresh perspective on Coleridge’s role in these debates by reading the relation between these two thinkers against the grain—zooming in on texts written by each of them in 1816 that reflect a surprising amount of common ground. Recognizing the futility of what Klancher calls the “bad map” being developed by such critics as Thomas De Quincey, which pitted the arts against the sciences in straightforwardly oppositional terms (as literature of power and knowledge), Coleridge, in his 1816 “Treatise on Method” and then in a more elaborate account in *The Friend* two years later, distinguished between “‘Method,’ or something like pure science that has been transfigured beyond mere experiment into a lasting law of nature and mind,” and “‘Theory,’” which comprised “the experimental, observation-based sciences” (168). The distinction was not always obvious. Electricity had ascended into the realm of Method, but botany and magnetism remained examples of Theory. The two categories—Method and Theory—were in turn mediated by the all-important middle category of the fine arts.

The more simplistic opposition that Coleridge was pushing back against, between the arts and sciences or De Quincey’s literature of power and knowledge, was for critics such as Mill emblematic of the divide between the advocates of poetry and their utilitarian nemeses. But reading Coleridge’s schema for the organization of

knowledge against Bentham's 1816 *Chrestomathia* enables Klancher to recover a surprising and important degree of common ground. What united them was their mutual recognition of the need "to rethink the Enlightenment pairing of 'arts and sciences' as a question of the coherence between cultural practices and disciplinary knowledges" (156). Rather than setting "science" and "art" against each other, Bentham's *Chrestomathia* emphasized both their permeability and their contingency. Few "compartments" of knowledge were wholly art or science; their relationship was better understood in terms of the temporal relation in which practice becomes knowledge: "over time, art becomes science, science reveals its internal art" (166).

Within a few years, Bentham and Coleridge would diverge into the more oppositional perspectives suggested by Mill. But as Klancher suggests, this brief instance of similar efforts to redraw the map of knowledge in terms of a fresh understanding of the relation between the arts and sciences, grounded in a sense of their mutuality rather than opposition, discloses an intriguing missed opportunity in the evolution of the disciplinary map. The "arts and sciences" were being "transfigured" or invested with new forms of prestige and authority in part by narrowing the scope of each of them—divesting them of the "mechanical" aspects that had formerly been associated with both words. In charting the evolving network of tensions and alignments that helped to shape this process, Klancher offers a fresh perspective on what has now become the familiar topic of the emergence of the modern disciplinary map in this period by approaching the issue "recursively." Taking his cue from Bruno Latour, Klancher conceives of the idea of predisciplinarity not simply in the chronologically linear terms of what came before but, more suggestively, what might have been—not simply as "a mode of unorganized knowledge that anticipates a later disciplinary centering" but like Latour's image of the disciplinary black box: "some unopened box in an already constituted discipline . . . that, once closed, functions more or less silently as a current and essential part of what makes a particular discipline tick" (105). Reopening the black box that contained all that had to be left out of the equation in order to stabilize the emerging disciplinary map enables Klancher to read the history of the arts and sciences recursively, alive to the complex historical processes of selection and organization and the thick layers of mediation that helped to define it.



Noah Heringman's *Sciences of Antiquity: Romantic Antiquarianism, Natural History, and Knowledge Work* pursues this same project of expanding and complicating the discursive field that informs our understanding of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century culture by tracing the convergence of natural history, antiquarianism, and art history as intellectual pursuits that were united by a focus on questions about antiquity. The impact of these connections was both synchronic and diachronic; their many points of intersection simultaneously thickened what was in the process of becoming a familiar disciplinary map, but it did so in part by situating these alignments within new temporal frameworks. As Heringman points out, the idea of antiquity was shifting in

two very different directions. It was being extended to eras that preceded the Greek and Roman epochs, which the term had conventionally referred to, and at the same time, as a result of a growing nationalist impulse, it was being stretched forward to encompass the vogue for Britain's gothic past. These multiple interpretations of the idea of antiquity, all of which had powerful repercussions for how people living in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century viewed their own age, manifested themselves in a series of major research projects that culminated in lavish plate books that brought the results of extensive fieldwork to the public.

Heringman's focus on these highly collaborative research and publishing enterprises turns on an important paradox: the fact that, even as these research teams were transforming people's understanding of their relation to history, they were themselves exerting new forms of pressure on Britain's inherited social and intellectual relations. Heringman pursues these questions by focusing on a category of ambitious paid researchers whom he describes as "knowledge workers," a term he deploys in ways that are both historically and theoretically precise and helpfully elastic. These knowledge workers, who were distinguished by their "mixed motives of intellectual curiosity, economic and social ambition," were an intriguing group, and Heringman's study does them full justice (268). They may have worked as paid researchers and artists for the genteel patrons into whose projects they had been enlisted, but this did not prevent them from reinventing themselves as authors and intellectuals in their own right, even as they negotiated a set of uneasy relations with the patrons for whom they worked. Not surprisingly, the changes unleashed by these knowledge workers' ambitions did not always play out in straightforward or harmonious ways. On the contrary, the paradigm-shifting impact of these transformative forces ensured that they were marked by dissonance as well as collaboration, generating important questions about intellectual property, the changing patronage system that often structured the knowledge economy, and the uneasy relations between art, science, and cultural history.

The journals produced by Sydney Parkinson and Joseph Banks as a result of their participation in Captain Cook's first voyage to the South Pacific exemplify these complexities. On the surface, they serve as reminders of the important ethnographic dimension of this convergence of natural history and antiquarianism. But the fallout between Banks and Parkinson's brother, Stanfield, after Sydney Parkinson died of dysentery on the voyage home dramatizes the extent to which these relations could play themselves out in ways that were marked more by friction than cooperation. Stanfield charged Banks with stealing after Banks resisted his attempts to recover the ethnographic and zoological specimens or "curiosities" collected by his brother. Banks's resistance may well reflect the class dimension that helped to complicate these issues, but the intensity of the acrimony was in some ways a result of the social ambiguities generated by Parkinson's ambivalent position as a knowledge worker whose relation to Banks could not be resolved into either of the two appealingly easy categories of social equal or paid employee. Parkinson was clearly not a gentleman collector on par with Banks, but neither could he be aligned with the four servants or trained collectors who accompanied Banks as employees. He occupied a more confusing middle ground,



a knowledge worker in the process of “reinventing himself as an author and a collector” (74), and who, as a result of his brother’s feud with Banks over the ownership of the artifacts he had collected, remains a vivid example of the tensions these complexities could entail.

Whereas Banks’s distinguished place in the history of science and the importance of Cook’s voyages have ensured an enduring awareness of these issues, the extraordinary relationship between the self-styled aristocrat whose real name was Pierre-François Hughes (but who passed himself off as Baron d’Hancarville) and Sir William Hamilton—“the rogue antiquary and the diplomat-naturalist”—manifested itself in still more melodramatic ways (77). Stationed in Naples as British ambassador in 1764, Hamilton hired d’Hancarville to assist him with the production of a series of important archeological and antiquarian books, beginning with the massive four-volume folio collection *Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities* (1766), which was based on Hamilton’s acquisition of hundreds of Greek vases and artifacts. Hamilton preferred to think of their working relationship in more traditional patronage terms, but having assembled a team of workers (funded by Hamilton) who worked on the project under his supervision, d’Hancarville did his best to cast their relationship in more collaborative terms that Hamilton predictably resisted: “D’Hancarville continually sought to enlist Hamilton as an equal partner—intellectually, fiscally, even socially—while the latter maintained the stance of a patron” (126). Even as they were negotiating these more delicate questions of social status, the two men were in the process of developing a radically new historical account of the origins of Western civilization that extended the idea of antiquity back to earlier periods than had previously been imagined. Fusing archeological and natural historical inquiries in their contemplation of the archival richness of the volcanic remains that were being excavated from Vesuvius, they argued for an ambitious rewriting of classical history that emphasized the importance of what Hamilton described as a “‘remote antiquity . . . out of the reach of history’” (78).

Heringman then turns his attention to England, exploring the collaborations between the antiquarian Richard Gough and his paid draftsman, Jacob Schnebbelie, and between Sir Henry Englefield and Thomas Webster, whom Englefield hired to do geological fieldwork for his *Description of the Isle of Wight* (1816). Like Heringman’s work on the complex and sometimes fraught relations between Banks and Parkinson, and between Hamilton and d’Hancarville, these final studies of antiquarian projects within Britain highlight the extent to which the networks of knowledge workers that emerged in this period were simultaneously challenging existing conceptions of history and reimagining their own working relations. Like many genuinely transformative historical dynamics, these changes emerged as unintended consequences of other, very different enterprises, but this did not make their impact any less influential. As Heringman puts it in his discussion of the rising antiquarian interest in gothic churches, “the division of labour in the eighteenth-century knowledge work, although it was created to facilitate the exploitation of knowledge workers, eventually empowered a new class of professionals, and in the case of architectural antiquities, it also encouraged an

increasingly democratic paradigm of national heritage” (279). Heringman’s careful attention to the extraordinarily rich intellectual and social complexities that defined these collaborative networks offers an important account of the highly mediated and sometimes unruly relations that would have such a profound impact on the emerging disciplinary order that has today become the object of renewed critical scrutiny. Together, these two important books exemplify the challenge implicit in many critical debates today of developing new maps more capable of doing justice to the intellectual topography of the past, and in doing so, of posing important questions about the nature of our own disciplinary relations.

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