



# **Romantic Feuds: Transcending the 'Age of Personality' (Nineteenth Century Series (Ashgate))**

*Kim Wheatley*



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Romantic writers such as Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge aspired to rise above the so-called 'age of personality,' a new culture of politicized print gossip and personal attacks. Nevertheless, Southey, Coleridge, and other Romantic-era figures such as Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, Sydney Owenson, and the explorer John Ross became enmeshed in lively feuds with the major periodicals of the day, the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review. Kim Wheatley focuses on feuds from the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, suggesting that by this time the vituperative rhetoric of the Edinburgh and the Quarterly had developed into what Coleridge called 'a habit of malignity.' Attending to the formal strategies of the reviewers' surprisingly creative prose, she traces how her chosen feuds take on lives of their own, branching off into other print media, including the weekly press and monthly magazines. Ultimately, Wheatley shows, these hostile exchanges incorporated literary genres and Romantic themes such as the idealized poetic self, the power of the supernatural, and the quest for the sublime. By turning episodes of print warfare into stories of transfiguration, the feuds thus unexpectedly contributed to the emergence of Romanticism.



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