begun to crack open the idea of the publisher’s series, and it is an important book for anyone interested in looking at new modes of understanding the publishing industry, including how it interacted with and was shaped by social, economic, and cultural histories.

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In _Romantic Magazines and Metropolitan Literary Culture_, David Stewart makes a claim for labelling the decade following the end of the Napoleonic wars, the years between 1815 and 1825, the “age of magazines” (1). Stewart situates himself amongst other scholars of Romantic literature such as William St. Clair and Jon P. Klancher by noting that the Romantic period witnessed an explosion in the number of periodicals published; for many members of the United Kingdom, this explosion provoked anxiety about the state of literature and readership. The expansion in the reading public was mirrored by an expansion of the metropolitan population, which was commonly perceived as increasingly and bewilderingly heterogeneous during this period of time. Stewart reaches into new territory in scholarship on the Romantic press by arguing that, whereas other writers sought stability and unity through their writing, magazine writers responded playfully to these dramatic changes in urban culture and reading publics. Magazine writers, Stewart states, deliberately reflected the heterogeneity and instability of the metropolis and reading public by creating heterogeneous and unstable magazines. Stewart provides important insight into the ways that magazine writers experimented with styles, formats, and topics in this decade of uncertainty before the medium of the magazine became fixed and definable.

In order to ground his argument in text, Stewart offers a wealth of excerpts from Romantic magazines. He covers a variety of magazines, from Leigh Hunt’s _The Examiner_ to Henry Colburn’s _New Monthly Magazine_, but focuses primarily on Blackwood’s _Edinburgh Magazine_ as emblematic of experimental magazines published between 1815 and 1825. Similarly, Stewart takes _Gentleman’s Magazine_ as representative
of traditional conventions of magazine writing in order to describe magazine styles and structures that preceded Blackwood’s. Gentleman’s Magazine remained consistent in its format since its establishment in 1731: it was composed of letters written to the Gentleman’s fictional editor, Sylvanus Urban. Though Gentleman’s was innovative in its time in that it provided short articles on a wide range of topics, it imagined its reading public as a homogeneous group of cultured, well-read gentlemen. By the time period under discussion in Stewart’s book, Gentleman’s had become outdated and defined itself in opposition to up-and-coming magazines such as Blackwood’s. First published in 1817, Blackwood’s operated under the assumption that its audience could be simultaneously interested in a number of disparate pieces of writing. To that end, Blackwood’s took pleasure in leaping rapidly from subject to subject, creating a chaotic but entertaining reading experience. Blackwood’s further bewildered its readers by introducing a number of named writers to its staff who were all fictional yet wrote in distinctive and highly personal styles. These fictional writers starred in ongoing casual conversations, entitled “Noctes Ambrosianae,” which served to both create a sense of community amongst the writers and readers and to remind the reading public that these figures were not flesh-and-blood. These techniques, and a variety of others, blurred the line between a number of dichotomies, including reader and writer, truth and fiction, and local and global, making Blackwood’s an unsettling but entertaining read.

Though Blackwood’s was often a mercurial, unstable magazine, during this decade it consistently defined itself in opposition to what it termed “Cockney” writers. Hunt, the editor of The Examiner, was chief amongst these Cockney writers. By Cockney, Blackwood’s was referring to a figure that became familiar in periodicals and graphic art during the early nineteenth century. Blackwood’s located the Cockney in London, though other representations depicted him simply as a city dweller. Blackwood’s implied that its writers were “naturally” gentlemen, whereas Cockney men were bad actors who constantly struggled and never quite succeeded to present the appearance of gentility and erase their trade origins. However, Stewart argues that the more desperately Blackwood’s writers struggled to delineate the differences between themselves and Hunt, the more obvious it became that they depended on figures like Hunt in order to create their sense of identity. According to Stewart, when Blackwood’s writers labeled Hunt a Cockney, they only revealed their anxieties about their own potential for Cockneyism, lending credence to magazine
writer William Hazlitt’s claim that they were the “Cockneys of the North” (85).

Moreover, Stewart takes Hazlitt’s analysis a step further by positing that the medium of the magazine is itself Cockney. The Cockney was a symptom of Romantic fears about the booming metropolitan population. The city allowed the “true” gentleman and the man who only performed gentility to exist side-by-side, making it more difficult to discern one from the other. Cultural signifiers of class status were also corrupted by the city. Those who derided the Cockney argued that audiences for art shows and literature were becoming Cockneysied in urban centres. They were unable to discern between good and bad art and literature, blindly and uncritically absorbing it all. Magazines contributed to this problem precisely because, like the Cockney and the city in which he resided, they blurred boundaries. Magazines like *Blackwood’s* were neither one thing nor the other; they straddled the gap between high art and trash and literature and commercial product. Furthermore, they created the type of reading public that many other Romantics were attempting to eradicate. They encouraged the rapid consumption of a number of disparate types of writing, from poetry to advertising. Magazines of this decade, as Stewart claims, were threatening because they both reflected and supported the emergence of the Cockney.

Stewart draws usefully on other studies of the Romantic magazine and metropolitan culture, as well as thoughtfully analyzing a vast range of magazine articles, in order to argue that magazines of this decade reflected the unstable and yet-to-be-defined nature of the city, the reading public, and the art world. This is a persuasively and clearly argued book that will be of great interest to scholars of Romantic literature, the British periodical press, and the medium of the magazine.

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