



Landor's Cleanliness: A Study of Walter Savage Landor

Adam Roberts

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Cleanliness, both in the sense of a neoclassical stylistic purity and of an individual moral and political probity, was centrally important to Walter Savage Landor's writing, both in his prose and poetry. At the same time, this commitment to purity was contaminated in a variety of eloquent and complicating uncleannesses: his own fiery temper and frequent rages; his sometimes scurrilous and sexually explicit Latin poems; and the innovative, compacted, proto-Modernist

verse style of works such as his epic *Gebir*, as stylistically-tangled and potent a poem ever produced in the Romantic era.

The present study, the first comprehensive study of Landor's writing for nearly half a century, addresses the whole of Landor's prodigious output over the seven decades of his writing life, in verse, prose, and drama, in English and Latin: from the brief lyrics by which (if at all) he is remembered today up to his idylls, tragedies, and epics; from his pamphlets and essays to historical novels like *Pericles* and *Aspasia* and the textual colossus of the *Imaginary Conversations*.

'Cleanliness' becomes the organising principle by which this heterogeneous and multivocal body of work is read. At once a survey of Landor's output and life, a critically engaged reading of his work and an interrogation of the principles of poetry itself, Landor's Cleanliness seeks to reconfigure the map of Romantic and

Victorian writing, and move Landor's reputation at least some way in the direction of the eminence he once enjoyed: as a major writer of his time, both intensely characteristic of the nineteenth-century and startlingly relevant to the twenty-first.



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