BRITISH ROMANTICISM IN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

INTO THE EUROZONE

EDITED BY STEVE CLARK AND TRISTANNE CONNOLLY

British Romanticism in European Perspective

Also by Steve Clark and Tristanne Connolly

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WILLIAM BLAKE AND THE BODY

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Edited by

Steve Clark
Visiting Professor, University of Tokyo, Japan

and

Tristanne Connolly
Associate Professor of English, St Jerome's University, Canada

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Notes on the Contributors

Stephen Bygrave teaches at the University of Southampton, where he is Professor of Enlightenment and Romantic Studies. His books include two studies of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, an account of the American theorist Kenneth Burke, a textbook on Romantic writing, and *Uses of Education: Readings in Enlightenment in England* (2009). With Stephen Bending, he edits the Chawton House Library Series and the two have also co-edited novels by Henry Mackenzie and Thomas Day.

David Chandler is a professor in the English Department at Doshisha University, Kyoto, having obtained his D.Phil at the University of Oxford. He has published widely on the literature and culture of the British Romantic Period as well as reviewing and writing on opera and musical theatre, including edited books on the composers Alfredo Catalani and Italo Montemezzi. Much of his recent work has been on musical adaptations of Charles Dickens's novels.

Steve Clark is Visiting Professor at the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, University of Tokyo. He has edited several collections of essays on Blake, most recently *Blake 2.0: William Blake in Twentieth-Century Art, Music and Culture* (2012) with Tristanne Connolly and Jason Whittaker. Other publications include *Something We Have that They Don't: Anglo-American Poetic Relations since 1925*, edited with Mark Ford (2004) and *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia*, edited with Paul Smethurst (2008). He has recently edited a special issue on the later thought of Paul Ricoeur for *Theory Culture and Society* (2010), and is currently working on a study of collective memory and cultural phenomenology.

Tristanne Connolly is Associate Professor in the English Department of St Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo, Canada. She is the author of *William Blake and the Body* (2002) and various essays on Blake, Erasmus Darwin, Romantic women poets, maternity, sexuality and religion. She is the editor of several essay collections, most recently *Sexy Blake* (with Helen Bruder, 2013). Her current research interests include the interrelations of science, sexuality and aesthetics in Romantic period writing. She is working on a digital edition of *The Loves of the Plants*.

Kimiyo Ogawa is Associate Professor at Sophia University, Japan. She has published essays on Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen. She is currently interested in how advances in medical and physiological science informed representations of mind and human behaviour in a range of Gothic texts.

Kaz Oishi has been an Associate Professor at the University of Tokyo since 2012. His publications include *Coleridge, Romanticism, and the Orient: Cultural Negotiations*, co-edited with David Vallins and Seamus Perry (2013), *Cross-Cultural Negotiations: Romanticism, Mobility and the Orient*, a special issue of POETICA co-edited with Felicity James (2011), and 'An Ideological Map of (Mis)reading: William Blake and Yanagi Muneyoshi in Early-Twentieth-Century Japan' in *The Reception of Blake in the Orient*, edited by Steve Clark and Masashi Suzuki (2006). He has been working on the reception of English Romanticism in early twentieth-century Japan, as well as on philanthropic ideas in the Romantic age.

Peter Otto is ARC Research Professor (DORA) at the University of Melbourne. His recent publications include *Multiplying Worlds: Romanticism, Modernity, and the Emergence of Virtual Reality* (2011). He is currently preparing a selected edition of Blake's poetry and designs for Oxford University Press and completing a book on William Blake in the twenty-first century, including poetry, prophecy, the history of imagination, and the futures of Romanticism.

Maja Pašović holds an MA in English Literary Studies from the University of Waterloo, Canada, and an MA in English Language Teaching (TEFL) from the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. She is currently working as an English instructor and translator at an educational institute in Sarajevo. Her areas of research and speciality include English Romantic poetry, specifically William Blake, Pre-Raphaelite poetry and philosophy, Bosnian literature and sociology, and the translation of literary works. She is also the co-editor of an online scholarly journal *Luvah: Journal of the Creative Imagination*. She wrote an extensive MA thesis on the concepts of time and space in Blake through the lens of Eastern teachings and traditions, and is currently planning doctoral research on Blake's use of mathematical patterns.

Diane Piccitto is Assistant Professor of English at Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada. Her monograph *Blake's Drama: Theatre, Performance, and Identity in the Illuminated Books* (2014) explores the relationship between Blake's composite art form and drama, the stage, selfhood, action and the body. Other publications include '1793 and the Aftermath of the French Revolution' for the online project *BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth-Century History*, edited by Dino Franco Felluga, and 'Reclaiming "the Grandeur of Inspiration": Authenticity, Repetition, and Parody in William Blake's *Milton*' in *Paradoxes of Authenticity*, edited by Julia Straub (2012). She has recently co-edited with Angela Esterhammer and Patrick Vincent *Romanticism, Rousseau, Switzerland: New Prospects* (forthcoming), and is also co-editor with Julian Wolfreys of *Victoriographies: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Writing, 1790–1914*.

David Shakespeare successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, 'Marriage and the Social Contract in British Romantic Discourse', in September 2014. He is currently working on a book-length project on marriage and the state in Romantic Britain that discusses works by Wollstonecraft and Godwin, Burke and Paine, Austen, Lewis and Radcliffe, and the traditionally canonical Romantic poets. He teaches courses in communication, literary studies, public speaking and rhetoric at the University of Waterloo.

Evy Varsamopoulou is Associate Professor in the Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus, where she teaches courses in Anglophone and Comparative Literature and Philosophical Aesthetics from the eighteenth century to the present. She is the author of *The Poetics of the Künstlerinroman and the Aesthetics of the Sublime* (2002), and has recently published articles on J.M. Coetzee, the crisis of the humanities, and eco-criticism. Amongst her current projects are a series of articles on film aesthetics and a book-length study of the political and philosophical value of the autobiographical mode in British Romantic prose.

Introduction: Into the Eurozone: European Dimensions of British Romanticism, Then and Now

Steve Clark and Tristanne Connolly

Where is Europe?

Studies of Enlightenment tend to take as their starting point the issue of whether the movement should be regarded as a unified phenomenon, based not only on circulation of texts but on networks of personal connection, such as Hume in Paris and Gibbon in Geneva, and Voltaire and Rousseau in Britain. European Romanticism tends to be perceived apart from these interactions, instead divided up into indigenous traditions, each embedded in its own distinctive language, ethnicity and popular culture. In contrast to the exhaustive attention paid to colonial contexts, comparatively little has been given to the interrelation of British Romanticism to other European national variants. James Chandler's *Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature* (2009) does not even have an index entry for Europe. It includes essays by David Simpson on 'France, Germany, America', Esther Schor on 'The "Warm South"', and Mary Favret on 'Writing, Reading and the Scenes of War'; overall coverage, however, remains minimal. Nicholas Roe's *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide* allots ten pages of over 700 to one essay on 'Europe' by Christoph Bode, while Michael Ferber's *Companion to European Romanticism* omits Scandinavia, Holland and Belgium, Portugal and almost the whole of Eastern Europe (only containing entries on Poland and Russia). This collection seeks to consider what British Romanticism looks like when its own international connections and circulations are taken into account. One implication of seeing British Romanticism in a fully European context is that it provides a way to think through the contested issue of periodization. Different national Romanticisms begin and end (if they end at all) at different times. Many European iterations of the movement are later than Britain's, while what Joseph Addison in his poem 'The Campaign' (1705) calls 'the gaudy dream of empire', and its concomitant concern with credit and wealth, permeates both empiricist aesthetics and Romantic lyric from the beginning of the eighteenth century.

To pursue this example as a starting point for thinking about the periodization of British and European Romanticism: according to a highly traditional narrative, Addison's *Spectator* papers on *The Pleasures of Imagination* become a foundational text of Romanticism through redefining aesthetics in terms of empiricist psychology rather than neoclassical concepts of genre.[1] Yet not much attention has been paid to Addison as an individual writer, particularly poet, nor have the larger European-scale political and economic aspects of his writing been fully appreciated as they contribute to Romanticism:

> Deluded Prince! how is thy greatness crost,
> And all the gaudy dream of empire lost,
> That proudly set thee on a fancied throne,
> And made imaginary realms thy own! (Addison, 'The Campaign', 91)

The basic dates would seem to rule out categorizing this as Romantic poetry: it was written in 1705 as a response to Marlborough's victory at Blenheim over Louis XIV, whose 'Deluded' ambition was to seize the Dutch throne and thereby dominate Europe. Generically it is a commissioned piece of panegyric: Addison was very much a pen for hire, unemployed after his return from Italy in 1702. As a '*Gazette in Rhyme*',[2] the poem commemorates triumph in battle in unabashedly militaristic fashion. The celebration of nationalism and victory here may try to insist on primacy but cannot assert isolation: conflict is an aspect of international relations, and English history and identity are bound up with Europe. 'If to the Fight his active Soul is bent, / The fate of *Europe* turns on its Event' ('The Campaign', 95), achieving a victory through which 'England was raised to the greatest height of Gladness it had ever since it was a Nation' (*Spectator*, 165, 8 September 1711, 2: 151). 'Gaudy' implies brightly coloured, and perhaps vividly decorated soldiers' uniforms, but also suggests 'highly ornate' commodities (OED 3a), and evokes imagination through the imagery of optics. The lines dramatize a moment of disenchantment in economic and military as well as epistemological and aesthetic senses (the unreality of the realm of secondary qualities).[3] The rebuke of the hubris of Louis XIV, 'Deluded Prince', transfers itself to the ambitions of the British state, to which 'greatness cross'd'; in the course of the next century, the 'fancied throne' of the Hanoverian dynasty undoubtedly succeeded in making 'imaginary realms [its] own'. While the poem indulges in jingoistic gloating, its criticisms of the defeated French also reflect back on Britain and on empire itself. The 'gaudy dream of empire' depends on wilfully sustained illusion but remains equally vulnerable to a traumatic moment of dispersal.

In *Spectator* 3 (3 March 1711), the narrator recounts, 'In one of my late Rambles, or rather Speculations, I looked into the great hall where the Bank is kept' (1:14), combining financial and cognitive senses of 'Speculations'

(OED 8, 4) while 'Rambles' emphasizes the unpredictable circulation of capital. 'The Thoughts of the Day gave my Mind Employment for the whole Night, so that I fell insensibly into a kind of Methodical Dream, which dispos'd all my Contemplations into a Vision or Allegory, or what else the Reader shall please to call it' (1:14). In the dream, '*Publick Credit*' is beheld as 'a beautiful Virgin, seated on a Throne of Gold'.[4] Addison's remark on 'The Delicacy of her Constitution' merges the casual sexism of her being described as 'troubled with the Vapours' with the incipient threat of Jacobite invasion (1:15):

> She was likewise (as I afterwards found) a greater Valetudinarian than any I had ever met with, even in her own Sex, and subject to such Momentary Consumptions, that in a twinkling of an Eye, she would fall away from the most florid Complexion, and the most healthful state of Body, and wither into a Skeleton. (1:15–16)

Credit is both all-pervasive and latently untrustworthy; a new world order that might be exposed at any moment as facile illusion. 'She changed Colour' is later repeated in her response to the Spectres of Tyranny and Anarchy: 'She fainted and dyed away at the Sight … Whilst I was lamenting this sudden Desolation … the whole Scene vanished' (1:17). Thus, as in *Spectator* 413 (24 June 1712):

> We are everywhere entertained with pleasing Shows and Apparitions, we discover imaginary Glories in the Heavens, and in the Earth, and see some of this Visionary Beauty poured out upon the whole Creation; but what a rough unsightly Sketch of Nature should we be entertained with, did all her Colouring disappear and the several Distinctions of Light and Shade vanish? In short, our Souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion, and we walk about like the Enchanted Hero of a Romance, who sees beautiful Castles, Woods and Meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling of Birds, and the purling of Streams; but upon the finishing of some secret Spell, the fantastick Scene breaks up, and the disconsolate Knight finds himself upon the barren Heath, or in a solitary Desart. (3:546–7)

By way of a gloss, in the following paragraph Addison cites Locke on primary and secondary qualities, but this 'first Separation' could also be read in economic terms as the sudden demystifying of Credit. After being 'entertained with Shows and Apparitions' and other 'imaginary Glories', all too content with being 'delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion', we awake 'upon the barren Heath or in the solitary Desart'. In the original publication, the passage was immediately followed by a letter inserted by Steele inviting readers to participate in a lottery of dubious legality: 'it

attends to no greater a good than that of getting Mony' (3:547). Given that the essay was published during a period of prolonged conflict, it is not difficult to regard Addison's 'disconsolate Knight' as a warrior waking on the battlefield: an interpretation not at odds with the economic reading considering the financial motivations of participating in war, on the national and individual levels. Richard Steele, the co-editor of the *Spectator*, was a serving soldier for nearly a decade; Addison himself was a seasoned politician, who rose eventually to be Secretary of State.

Now fast-forward a century to another 'Deluded Prince', or rather, deluded knight, in Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' (*Poems*, 357–9), a poem written in the wake of Waterloo, but which, through its reworking of Addison, can also be linked back to Blenheim:[5]

1
O what can ail thee, knight at arms,
  Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
  And no birds sing.

2
O what can ail thee, knight at arms,
  So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
  And the harvest's done. (ll. 18)

The 'knight at arms' haunts the battlefield, lamenting the 'harvest' of the dead; similarly in 'The Campaign', there are 'The discontented shades of slaughter'd hosts / That wander'd on her banks, her heroes' ghosts' (86). The 'pacing steed' (l. 21) may have been put to lethal use, like Marlborough 'Plunging through seas of blood his fiery steed' (Addison, 'Campaign', 89) or, in Keats's time, like the cavalry charge into the unarmed crowd at Peterloo. The third stanza can be read as applying to either Knight or Belle Dame:

I see a lily on thy brow,
  With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
  Fast withereth too. (ll. 9–12)

The latter is more direct – the Lady's beauty possesses a kind of contagion which deceives and destroys – but the former attribution has much to commend it. 'Anguish moist and fever dew' are literally appropriate to the mental and bodily diseases of military campaigning; 'so haggard and so woe-begone' is equally evocative of battle-fatigue. At the risk of

anachronism, one might say the knight displays symptoms of shell-shock. From this perspective, the 'fairy's child' (l. 14) does not try to seduce the knight away from the realm of action, but should herself be seen as personifying an internalized sense of mission. If what the knight loves has betrayed him, this is not a lapse from manly duty, but a consequence of that manly duty itself. The rewards offered by the lady of 'roots of relish sweet, / And honey wild, and manna dew' (ll. 25–6) can be read as a displaced evocation of erotic pleasure; however, in a more literal sense, they represent desirable commodities underpinning imperial expansion. The 'zone' the knight makes for her (l. 18), even in its literal sense of a belt, connotes an attempt at possession, the making of a border of ownership (which of course backfires on the knight); its geographical reference (OED 1, 2; 2a) could perhaps be extended to state boundaries such as those formed after the Congress of Vienna. If Addison is seen as inaugurating a Romantic tradition, Keats's poem might be seen as its termination. This would apply equally to its 1819 and 1848 forms, as a post-Waterloo composition later published in a year of European revolutions.

Like the curiously disregarded European dimension, the often neglected or subordinated earlier decades of so-called 'pre-Romanticism' in particular have much richness to offer in understanding what, as well as when, Romanticism is. Perhaps even a unitary definition of Romanticism – that elusive thing – might be possible based on the emergence of nationalism during the extended period encompassed by an alternative timeline of the movement. This collection takes up Tony Judt's adage in *Postwar*: 'Europe, then, is not so much about *absolute* geography – where a country or a people actually are – as *relative* geography: where they sit in relation to others' (753). This need not imply that European Romanticism is a disparate plurality of fissiparous traditions; instead, the movement might contain latent resources for defining a post-national sense of European identity.

Into the Eurozone

Attempts to introduce a formal European constitution seemed stalled for the indefinite future after negative referendum results in France and Holland in 2005, states that would generally be estimated as europhile compared to Britain. However, with the ongoing financial crisis in the Eurozone, further integration is very much on the agenda; there seems general agreement that stronger tertiary level institutions are necessary to protect the common currency from speculative fluctuation. Judt notes the 'chronic absence of interest on the part of the European public', with widespread popular disaffection with the 'democratic deficit' in supranational institutions and perceived 'haughty disdain' of a distant elite (730–1). The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union in 2012 could be for what it might hope to do rather than for what it has already achieved. Such an

expectant future-oriented attitude to Europe invites a corresponding look back into history, particularly to the anticipation of political transformation in the 'Age of Revolution'. The relation between national and transnational axes is crucial to bureaucratic administration of both phases of the continental system of administration, with acute British scepticism towards, and resultant exclusion from, their respective continental systems. As Judt notes, 'the more historically disposed perhaps called to mind the passage in the *Mémorial de Saint-Hélène* by the Comte de les Cases, where the exiled Napoléon Bonaparte envisages a future "association européenne" with "one code, one court, one currency"' (715).

Why such a fuss about 'one currency'? Sovereignty may be at stake, in the senses of both supreme authority and control of coinage (sovereigns), but this in itself may imply an anachronistic model of national identity in an increasingly globalized world economy. Post-imperial sensibility in Britain appears prepared to accept an inevitable contraction of international influence, but not assimilation into a wider European confederation (despite initially lobbying for expansion of membership to former eastern bloc countries to counterbalance the dominance of the Franco-German axis). In a British context, there is a degree of *schadenfreude* at the problems of the Eurozone, combined with ready recourse to attributing the sluggish nature of any domestic recovery to economic turbulence abroad. Yet the very refusal to participate has become a determining absence in both state policy and cultural attitudes.

The term 'zone' is itself curiously indeterminate: Judt notes that:

> Because much of Europe until recent times was not divided into states but instead accommodated within empires, it helps to think of the external markers of the continent not as frontiers but as indeterminate boundary regions – marchers, *limes, militärgenze, krajina*: zones of imperial conquest and settlement, not always topographically precise but delimiting an important political and cultural edge. (752)

So where 'in relation to' their neighbours are 'the British – or rather the notoriously Euroskeptic English' (Judt, 757)? (Ireland and Scotland might claim to be more properly European in both historical affiliation and contemporary outlook.) Judt stresses that, because of the demoralizing experience of rapid postwar decolonization:

> the creative re-imagining of the national past in France and in the UK was of another order altogether … The confidence and security of global empire had been replaced by uneasy memories and uncertain future prospects … for nations reared within a living memory of grandeur and glory, 'Europe' would always be an uncomfortable transition: a compromise, not a choice. (769)

For France, the issue of 'linguistic diminution' becomes crucial; hence the ferocious determination to preserve French as 'the language of cultivated cosmopolitan elites – and thus the *European* language *par excellence*' (Judt, 759).[6] For the English, a 'genuine nostalgia for a fake past' has led to a 'bowdlerization of memory' (Judt, 772–3):

> The final decades of the century had seen an escalating public fascination with the past as a detached artifact, encapsulating not recent memories but *lost* memories: history not so much as a source of enlightenment about the present but rather as an illustration of how very different things had once been … The present was depicted not as heir to history but as its orphan: cut off from the way things were and the world we have lost. (Judt, 768)

There is a similar 'irony of this juxtaposition of popular English disdain and mistrust for the institutions and ambitions of "Europe" with a widespread national desire to spend their spare time and money there' (Judt, 758). In sport, for instance, there seems little difficulty in accepting a common identity: why should the EU as a post-national institution not be accorded an equivalent prestige to the European Champions League? Yet euroscepticism, as reflected in the emergence of the UK Independence Party, has increased in England to such a point that David Cameron has felt obliged to concede a post-election referendum on the basic issue of EU membership.[7] Judt points out that 'despite keeping its distance from the euro zone, the British capital was now [in the 1990s] the unchallenged financial center of the continent and had taken on a glitzy high-tech energy that made other European cities seem dowdy' by comparison; as a consequence, London is 'crowded with young professionals and much more open to the ebb and flow of cosmopolitan cultures and languages than other European capitals' (755). For all the rhetoric of an inside / outside dichotomy, Europe already exists on both sides of the equation.

Judt offers a salutary reminder of the achievements of the European Union:

> The mere survival and re-emergence of the separate states of continental Europe after the cataclysm of total war; the absence of inter-state disputes and the steady extension of institutionalized forms of intra-European cooperation; the sustained recovery from thirty years of economic meltdown and the 'normalization' of prosperity, optimism and peace: all these invited a hyperbolic response. Europe's recovery was a 'miracle'. 'Post-national' Europe had learned the bitter lessons of recent history. An irenic, pacific continent had risen, 'Phoenix-like', from the ashes of its murderous – suicidal – past. (5)

Territorially speaking, Europe is 'just a sub-continental annexe to Asia', yet it is 'unique' in its complex patchwork of 'internal differences and contrasts':

'forty-six countries' (now 47, with Montenegro joining the Council of Europe in 2007) all with 'distinct and overlapping histories' (Judt, xiii). As post-Cold War developments abundantly demonstrate, nations can disappear as well as emerge: Judt offers the example of Transnistria, a tiny secessionist republic from Moldova that declared independence in 1990 (651–2). Europe should perhaps be regarded as an entity yet to be brought into being. For former Soviet bloc countries seeking admission, 'identification with "Europe" was not about a common past, now well and truly destroyed', but rather 'about asserting a claim, however flimsy and forlorn, upon a common future' (Judt, 753). The unpredictability of this process, as well as its utopian dimension, ought to compel interest, if not fascination:

> But because Europe was now taken for granted and – with the exception of its troubled and impoverished south-east – was decidedly unexotic for most viewers, travel and other programmes on European television had long since 'globalized' themselves, turning their attention to farther horizons while leaving the rest of Europe to languish: presumptively familiar territory but in practice largely unknown. (Judt, 781)

There is an equally striking lacuna in Romantic period studies: issues such as empire, slavery, and colonization have received extensive treatment, but even the possibility of an integrated narrative 'mapping the overlapping contours and fault-lines of European identity and experience' (Judt, 752) tends to be overlooked by Anglophone criticism.

Europe and Romanticism

Judt asks, 'Who are Europeans? What does it mean to be European? What *is* Europe – and what kind of a place do Europeans want it to be?' (752). What advantage is there to turn to the inheritance of the Romantic period to seek answers to these questions? Most obviously, it can be seen as the crucible of modern nationalism, not only in the state boundaries established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, but also in the nascent ethnicities seeking to declare their own independence after emergence from French dominance. As in Europe post-1945, the settlement 'was the insecure child of anxiety. Shadowed by history, its leaders implemented social reforms and built new institutions as a prophylactic, to keep the past at bay' (Judt, 6).

Nationalism comes early to Britain, but so arguably does Romanticism, whereas in the majority of Europe, it remains a post-1815 phenomenon: France 1830s, Spain 1840s. In terms of periodization, in most European traditions, early nineteenth-century Romanticism is a reaction – monarchist and sometimes sacramental – to revolution, succeeded by a slightly later more liberal variant which in turn feeds into the 1848 uprisings. Even in a British context, it is questionable whether Romanticism can be seen as a

historically progressive force. The composite national identity established by the Act of Union in 1707 was promoted in the context of a persistent Jacobite threat, through mid-eighteenth-century exploration of the literary past by figures such as the Wartons, Thomas Percy and Joseph Ritson. A similar pseudo-scholarly excavation of the Celtic periphery, which shades into forgery in James Macpherson and Iolo Morganwg, occurs at the moment when a unitary British state was being formed through the ongoing process of colonization of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It is a standard point in analyses of the emergence of modern nationalism that it goes backwards before moving forwards:[8] such projects of retrieval and, if necessary, invention of tradition must be seen as a precondition of developing a collective identity.

In *Romanticism in National Context,* Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich note opposing 'heritages of revolution and revolt' (3), with a recurrent gesture of throwing off the Norman yoke and an equally characteristic conservative retrieval of the past.[9] They conclude, 'At once drawing upon and opposing the Enlightenment', the Romantic 'passion for the pre-bourgeois past' is determined to 'uncover a national character and even "racial" continuities' (4–5), in continuous tension with an ideal of universal progress. There is inevitably an element of fabrication, even self-deception, in 'the very forging of individualism' (Porter and Teich, 1).[10] In a European context, the usual sequence of development appears to be from 'Enlightenment' to 'Modernity', in the form of the Napoleonic continental system or in Kosselleck's sense of open space or unfinished project,[11] and then on to 'Romanticism', often as a nationalist reaction to the post-1815 settlement.

Napoleon may be regarded as a visionary leader, but also as the technocratic creator of a unified French state of particularly dirigiste orientation, one powerful enough to dominate mainland Europe for over two decades. The Anglophone suspicion of projects of integration might be dated back to this point (reinforced by German control of the continent in the 1940s). Both European nationalism and Romanticism emerge as a reaction against French cultural imperialism, evident not only in Napoleon's role as charismatic modernizer, but also in the dominant aristocratic–diplomatic culture of the preceding century.[12] The suspension of contact between Britain and Europe during this extended period of hostilities has resulted in parallel deflection of critical attention. This means that British Romanticism tends to be seen in isolation, even though a second generation of internationalist writers – no less formidable figures than Byron and Shelley – commit themselves to the support of the nationalist movements prompted by the break-up of the continental system, and promptly suppressed.

Porter and Teich's volume states its central ambition with admirable explicitness: 'To identify and explain the overarching integrity of Romanticism' (2). Such holistic models have remained deeply unfashionable over the past two decades, but perhaps become more plausible, even necessary, in a European context. Romanticism can be defined via the principle of nationalistic

diversification, unified by its very plurality. The common commitment to patriotism, defining autonomous cultural traditions, inevitably produces simultaneous disunity, 'a chaos of rival and competing nationalisms' (Porter and Teich, 6), ultimately leading to the implosion that Judt identifies in the first half of the twentieth century. These traditions 'did not spread out from a single source, though some important growth points may be identified' (Porter and Teich, 2) such as the mid-eighteenth century bardic / gothic nexus, Rousseauvian sentiment, and German *Sturm und Drang*. To require multiple explanations and accept discrepant temporalities does not invalidate the concept's unity or the movement's historical immanence. It is stressed 'how these different national romanticisms coexisted in symbiotic relation to each other' (Porter and Teich, 2), both through geographical proximity and developmental stages. Questions of transmission, and reconstructing specific national heritages, must be balanced against the power of utopian projection and fictive proclamation (among other things, of the Europe that is yet to come).

Romanticism 'took shape under the influence of epochal upheavals' which are primarily identified with the 'French Revolution and British Industrial Revolution' (Porter and Teich, 3). It should be stressed that the former is anti-Romantic in many aspects: modernizing, bureaucratic, technological. It is possible to regard it as an end product of Enlightenment, in which case romance would be identified with the *ancien régime*, the ideology of chivalry.[13] Going by this chronology, 1789 marks the end-point rather than beginning of the Romantic era. Successionist models are too simplistic: Enlightenment as a continuous project of modernity both pre- and post-dates Romanticism. If the latter introduces new forms of subjectivity, these may no longer be viable from the vantage of the twenty-first century. Even alienation is intrinsically social: 'the exile is himself the product of the society from which he is banished or banishes himself' (Porter and Teich, 2).

Christoph Bode, in his above-mentioned essay on 'Europe' for *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, surmises that 'All this variety need not worry us if we reconceptualise European Romanticism as a set of responses, highly differentiated, and at times downright contradictory, to a historically specific challenge: the challenge of the ever-accelerating modernization of European society' (127). Thus European Romanticism is a response to a process that both precedes it and continues after to the present day:

> If we see European Romanticism as a transpersonal, cultural shift of paradigms, in which pressing social and cultural concerns were negotiated according to new, revolutionary rules, then the diversity of European Romanticism can no longer be held as proof against its unity or even against its existence. On the contrary, overwhelming diversity would then be the form in which European Romanticism unfolded, as a vast range of possible responses within a new framework. (Bode, 127–8)

Thus the ambition to establish a unified narrative of European Romanticism requires acknowledgement of this 'overwhelming diversity' that defines a common identity.[14] 'Romanticism is an ongoing, undeniably European project, whose very diversity, paradoxical though it may sound, is the hallmark of its unity: between them, the various European Romanticisms play out both the potential and the vicissitudes of modernity' (Bode, 135–6). If one accepts the emergence of nationalism as part of these 'vicissitudes of modernity', one might hold Romanticism culpable for the deficiencies of its more localized and atavistic forms. Or to pose the issue more positively, one might find resources in the Romantic tradition for defining a newer sense of European identity; its utopian horizon might even provide intimations of a post-national future.

What and when is Romanticism?

A strong case can be made for both an early dating and the chronological precedence of British Romanticism. The psychological aesthetics based on Lockean empiricism (Addison, Shaftesbury and others) of the early eighteenth century gets rapidly translated and reimported later in the century. The significant precursors to the Romantic movement in Switzerland (not only Rousseau but also Lavater and Fuseli) and in Sweden (via Swedenborg) emerge considerably later. In France, even if Rousseau is situated in that tradition and *Confessions* and *Nouvelle Héloïse* are regarded as Romantic texts, the fifty-year hiatus before Romanticism reappears in the 1830s has to be accounted for: de Staël and Chateaubriand were both writing from exile and post-1800.[15] So when did British Romanticism begin? One popular answer is that it commenced alongside the French Revolution in 1789. Yet there is no obvious reason to equate the Revolution with the storming of the Bastille and the summoning of the Three Estates, rather than seeing it as an extended process; why should these moments be preferred to the execution of Louis XVI or the Terror or the outbreak of war with England?[16] The year 1798 is still more arbitrary, even though it offers the tempting conjunction of the formation of the German Jena School with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. The latter volume had minimal initial impact: William St Clair notes that when Joseph Cottle 'transferred all his business assets to Longman not long after, the copyright was valued at nil' (161).

Yet in *Preromanticism*, Marshall Brown feels obliged to concede pre-emptively that earlier in the eighteenth century, 'Masterpieces are few … evasion was the order of the day for all the greatest talents of the period' (2–3).[17] 'Preromanticism has a bad name; rightly so'; therefore the term must be 'understood in its differentiating sense', as always being '*not yet* romantic' (1, 2). Clifford Siskin's essay, 'More is Different: Literary Change in the Mid and Late Eighteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, edited by John Richetti, offers some astute and amusing analysis

of the kinds of contraction and foreshortening of the decades between 1740 and 1780. 'Preromanticism has been a mode of aesthetic subordination at best and of derisive dismissal at worst. Either way, writing that may have seemed new, and potentially unsettling, became secondary and reassuring when put in its supposedly proper place as prelude to what came later' (803). A 'historical mismatch between categories and material' may be discerned at 'the moment in which the labels were formed' (811). As an alternative to accepting 'the classificatory path of least resistance', Siskin proposes renewed attention to 'the roles of quality and quantity in literary history' (804, 809). The material base of technological change, expanded literacy and demographic growth produces a 'quantitative sublime' (808). As a consequence, the category of the literary emerges as a 'narrowing in the face of a proliferation'; the simultaneous formation of mass market commodification confirms 'Britain's transformation into a *print culture* – a society saturated by the technology of print' (818, 822). Rather than gradual evolution, there is 'vertical distancing of the literary from the everyday'; 'take-off' occurs as a new system manifests itself (817–18). Siskin borrows the term 'emergence' from 'contemporary systems theory' which 'offers it as an alternative to standard causal explanations' (819). If one is being fussy about the status of 'explanations', there is a consistent failure to differentiate between motive, reason and cause. As with much history of the book criticism, there is a tendency for 'print culture' to become disconnected from other political and economic factors. Curiously, there seems an entire lack of event history, deemed by Siskin 'the difficulty specific to the eighteenth century: the absence of Bastilles and Waterloos' (799). Yet if one takes 1789–1815 as a period of turbulent conflict, it can be paralleled at the beginning of the century by the similar duration of the Nine Years' War from 1689–96, resuming as the War of Spanish Succession between 1701–14. The Battle of Blenheim in 1704 had a magnitude and decisive impact on international rivalries comparable to those of Waterloo. Siskin nevertheless argues that, 'conditioned by the notion that the political causes or marks shifts in the literary, we are not sure what to do about change that appears to occur in the absence of such links. We have not found a political event on which to hang a new label or help explain the origins of an existing one' (798). Is the technology of print not political in terms of wealth-creation and national prestige? No reference is made to other European contexts. If 'something important *did* happen just then' (798), perhaps it might be termed the formation of a unitary British state and its rise to global domination.

It would be an uncontentious point in imperial history that 1763 serves as clear point of transition to global empire, as a result of territorial gains from the Seven Years' War. Within the more influential recent historiography, the primary question is why Britain emerged as the strongest power from a fairly weak basis after protracted internal conflict in the seventeenth century. The standard response stresses the fiscal–military sinews of the

state. Superior credit facilities enabled economic take-off, permitting investment in technology, infrastructure and communications. This formed the basis for the wealth generated by the Industrial Revolution, which in turn proved capable of sustaining, then emerging victorious, from a twenty-year conflict with France.[18] A simplistic antithesis between Industrialism and Romanticism cannot be sustained; there is a notable overlap of key personnel in such groups as the Lunar Society and the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester.[19]

James Chandler's *Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature* displays little or no interest in the material factors supporting the economic expansion that underpinned Romantic culture. There is only one reference to the Industrial Revolution in the entire volume.[20] Equally striking is the absence of the well-established genealogy according to which early eighteenth-century aesthetic innovation produces a flurry of experimentalism at mid-century which evolved into full-blown Romanticism. (In Nisbet and Rawson's *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: The Eighteenth Century* this perspective is still deemed worthy of two lengthy essays).[21] This narrative might be queried for its supposition that developments in aesthetics must necessarily precede those in literature; more recent scholarship suggests symbiosis between the two and therefore a significantly earlier dating for a distinctively Romantic mode of writing.[22] Chandler defines the Romantic period as unprecedentedly self-conscious in its awareness of its own difference from past generations; if we are prepared to move the chronology around, it becomes possible to reinstate a genealogy that may unify arguments centring on Romantic subjectivity and the formation of a national canon with larger narratives of state and empire building.[23]

Adapting Siskin's terminology, there is no reason why 'take-off' should not be located at the beginning of the century, in both political–economic and aesthetic–literary spheres. David Fairer notes that between 1694 and 1720 'poetry began engaging with the new economic model being established in the metropolis' (4), and neatly shifts the terms of the periodization debate:

> To use the term 'romantic' in relation to the poetry of the early eighteenth century might seem anachronistic. The reverse, however, is the case. In the period [1700–30] the word was widely used; its range of meaning was clear; and poets recognised the romantic mode, and exploited it in their work. The issue unfortunately became confused by the importation of the term towards the end of the nineteenth century to link a heterogeneous selection of poets from the period 1790–1830 as the English 'Romantics'... by attaching to them retrospectively a label they would have disowned, to form a grouping that would have puzzled them. (102)

The logic of the argument suggests that eighteenth-century poetry is not a prelude to Romanticism, but rather Romanticism is already over by 1790.

If one opts for the terminology of period, one necessarily has to specify dates and enter into relation with event history; one might feel happier to jettison the term altogether and settle for a collective 'Age of Sentiment', or take up the convention of naming eras by their monarchs ('late Georgian' is generally preferred in discussions of British drama as well as political history). Chandler stresses the way in which the 'naming of the period' chosen for the title of the volume, *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature,* 'signals its distinction' (7), both in terms of separateness and quality of output; arguably it proves precisely the reverse. 'How is it that English Romantic literature does not jar on the ear?' (Chandler, 7). 'English' would certainly 'jar' on critics insisting on the importance and difference of Scottish, Irish and Welsh traditions.[24] The naming is justified through seeing English as 'identifying a language rather than a nation' (Chandler, 7), although clearly at this stage already Britain qualifies as an empire, and the spread of the language is tied to this fact. Again, why the insistence on monolingualism? If Romanticism is 'both a literary genre and a major European language group' (Chandler, 2), what about its relationship to other traditions?

The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature's notable lack of interest in the potential meta-narratives offered by political or economic perspectives raises large questions.[25] What is literary history and how is it distinct from other forms of historiographical narrative? Or should literature be better regarded as an autonomous system working according to its own teleological principles? Recent new historicist approaches define literature in terms of its relation to other cultural spheres, according to the now familiar models of circulation, homology and so on: texts are necessarily embedded in history, nodal points of interaction. By no means all the contributors adopt this position, but those arguing for the continued viability of the category of the aesthetic find it very difficult to avoid gravitating towards a post-Kantian German tradition, subsequently reimported in a fairly derivative fashion by Coleridge and De Quincey.[26] One might applaud such an emphasis on continental thought, but wonder why the interrelationship need be defined in such a simultaneously restrictive and prescriptive manner.[27] This is similar to Stuart Curran's *Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* which offers an essay on 'German Romantic Idealism' that serves as substitute for rather than an entry point into any fuller discussion of European Romanticism (which receives only two index references).[28] Whatever the merits or otherwise of conceptualizing Romanticism through philosophical aesthetics, it should be stressed, as David Simpson points out, that Germany, 'throughout the Romantic period was no nation at all, but a collection of states, monarchies and principalities more or less held together by language and geography, though even these could not be taken for granted' ('France, Germany, America', 206–7). It is an outsider, Germaine de Staël, whose *De l'Allemagne* (1813) initiates a distinctive sense of national

cultural tradition. Similarly, Hippolyte Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863–4) offers the first systematic history of British Romanticism as a movement; the model is then reimported via Edward Dowden (Hogle, 4–6).

Chandler raises 'the problem of how to determine the beginning and end of Romanticism' (12), and argues that Enlightenment is 'temporally prior but grammatically parallel' to Romanticism (12). The interdependence of the terms remains a vexed issue. Is Enlightenment a distinct period, Locke to Gibbon, or a metonym for a broader space of the distinctively modern? Siskin, in his contribution to the volume, 'The Problem of Periodisation: Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Fate of System', writes:

> the trace that is the calling card of the Enlightenment is the palimpsest. It not only figures the confusion of Enlightenment and Romanticism; even when we use the term 'Enlightenment' alone, two different versions seem to overwrite each other. One version is of the historically specific phenomenon in the past – the Enlightenment as a moment confined to the eighteenth century, as in the Scottish Enlightenment; the other is that of the Enlightenment as the condition of modernity, that is, something that we are all still in. (102)

The differentiation between Enlightenment as distinct historical phase and as unfinished project is familiar enough. In this instance, however, it has the corollary of eliding Romanticism in the transition posited between two self-contained states of Enlightenment, producing a near-tautologous equilibrium.

Chandler posits the 'characteristic boundaries' of the period as 1789, 1783 and 1776, with the end-point as 1832: dates deemed of self-evident significance, 'marked off in ways that are at once less arbitrary and more so' than those of other periods (1). The first *Cambridge History of English Literature*, edited by Ward and Waller (1920), had no volume on Romanticism, preferring *The Period of the French Revolution*; the *Oxford History of English Literature* bifurcated the period into *English Literature 1789–1815* by W.L. Renwick and *English Literature 1815–1832* by Ian Jack (both published in 1963). In a European context, the logical termination point would have to be 1848, which Porter and Teich call the 'sunset' of the Romantic movement (2). In terms of specifically British national–imperial history, 1815 would be more logical as initiating the century-long dominance of a maritime empire presiding over global mercantile networks. Even the Reform Act of 1832 need not be an obvious choice over the beginning of Victoria's reign in 1837. For Chandler, 'The Ends of Romanticism' (12) appears to imply both underlying purpose and point of termination, although neither are defined further. This in turn makes us 'ultimately weigh the question of whether, to the degree we consider Romanticism as a movement, we should consider it over' (Chandler, 13). This is different from Fairer's point that

literature called Romantic ended by 1790, since Romantic literature and Romanticism may not be the same. Do 'ism's expire in this way? It is striking that there is virtually nothing in the entire Chandler volume on the afterlife of Romanticism in subsequent reception history. The sole exception is Jerome McGann who is charged with answering the question, 'Is Romanticism Finished?', and invokes David Lurie's Byron opera in Coetzee's *Disgrace* (650–6). Considering the great and continuing reverberations of Romanticism in high and popular culture, and in politics, this is only an overture.

Romantic (inter)nationalism

If the Scottish people had chosen independence in the 2014 referendum, they would not be part of the potential future vote on whether the UK should remain in the European Union. Paradoxically, by not choosing separatist nationalism and opting to retain Britishness, they are in line to participate in a decision whether to retain a collective European identity. Of course this result passed by a fairly slim margin,[29] indicating the strength of Scottish nationalism, which has deep Romantic roots. James Macpherson, Robert Burns and Walter Scott are to a large extent responsible for ideas of Scotland and of Scottishness that resonate from their work forward through modern culture. And these three authors succeeded in influencing European readers, even to the degree of enchantment, arguably more than any other save Byron (who was half Scottish, and an honorary Greek).[30] Without Ossian there could be no Werther, and perhaps no Napoleon. As well as giving his hero an epic-scale Ossian obsession,[31] and having 'over 7% of the novel consisting of [his own] translated passages from "The Songs of Selma" and "Berrathon"', Goethe had previously sent translations of Ossian passages to Herder (Barnaby, xxiv–v). Legendarily, Napoleon always had Ossian in his pocket, even in the midst of battles (Van Tieghem, 2:6). Indeed, it has been argued that the 'appearance' of the Ossian poems 'in the early 1760s effectively inaugurates European Romanticism' (Duncan, 51), and more broadly that Macpherson's invention of lost cultural origins 'became the literary prototype of European Romantic nationalism' (Shields, 43). A major reason for this is that Ossian plays a crucial role in Herder's studies of folklore, which are foundational to ideas of modern nationalism.[32] That is, such ideas rely on an international perspective at their foundation, if Herder in Germany turns to a Scottish example, which itself indicates the national difference within a modern nation.

Just as the idea of Scottishness developed by Romantic writers can produce in our day films such as *Braveheart* (1995) about William Wallace's resistance, and *Mrs Brown* (1997) about Queen Victoria's loyal Scottish servant John Brown, during the Romantic period, too, it involved dual impulses of nationalism and union. Burns's 'Robert the Bruce's March to Bannockburn'

(1793) is as much a rousing cry for national independence, even at the cost of revolutionary violence, as it is an effort to communicate beyond national borders the feelings and experience, the pride and nobility of the Scots[33] – uniquely, yet in a way that connects them to the national revolutions of America and France, and the international, interracial desire for revolt against 'Chains & Slaverie' (2:236). Burns, here, like Macpherson and Scott, takes earlier, even pre-modern history and presents a modern rendition applicable to the current political and cultural scene, remaking ancient or medieval Scotland for the age of nations. And as for less distant history, Scott's famous subtitle to *Waverley*, 'Tis Sixty Years Since', at once marks the past as past and emphasizes its resonance in the present. It can also remind us that Macpherson as a boy experienced the events of the '45 and their aftermath from close up: 'between the ages of ten and eighteen [he] lived through scenes of appalling violence, and saw his home and family under the constant threat of further oppression' (Stafford, ix). Again it becomes clear that positing an earlier emergence of the Romantic movement makes far more sense on the cultural as well as the political level. Coinciding with traditional datings of pre-Romanticism, 1745 also carries with it the suggestion of the earlier Jacobite rising in 1715, just as Romantic roots can be traced back earlier in the century, as with Addison. Addison illustrates the possibility of the conjunction of Romanticism with nationalism, not just with rebellion; so does Macpherson, considering his status as an ally and apologist of the Hanoverian regime: along with holding various governmental positions from 1764 on, he 'had a secret government pension of £500, and was involved in newspaper presentation of government policy' (Thomson).

Macpherson was, on the one hand, so nationalistic as to refuse to admit the possibility that the stories of Ossian, and Fingal himself, might be Irish (37), while, on the other hand, in the same 'Preface' to *Fingal* (1761–2) he refers to the people of the poems of Ossian as 'the ancient inhabitants of Britain' (35). In 'A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal' (1765), he attempts to explain why 'those who understood both languages', Gaelic and English, 'never attempted a translation'. Either from incomplete knowledge of the poetry, or from 'modesty', they

> despaired of making the composition of their bards acceptable to an English reader ...
>
> This was long the opinion of the translator of the following collection, and though he admired the poems, in the original ... yet he never had the smallest hopes of seeing them in an English dress. He was sensible that the strength and manner of both languages were very different, and that it was next to impossible to translate the Galic poetry into any thing of tolerable English verse; a prose translation he could never think of, as it must necessarily fall short of the majesty of an original. It is highly

> probable, that the compositions of Ossian would have still remained in the obscurity of a lost language

if 'a gentleman', Hugh Blair, had not 'insisted with the present editor for a literal prose translation' (50–1). The irreconcilability of Gaelic and English suggests that the corresponding cultures are equally so. Yet Macpherson's Ossian poems are exactly this impossibility: the mediation of ancient Gaelic oral poetry for an English-speaking modern audience. This passage is as tangled as any part of the Ossian controversy. The assertion that intercultural translation cannot succeed is also the declaration that it is his purpose, and the vindication of Scottish culture is also its recasting for an English audience. Otherwise the poems would remain in obscurity, due not only to the apparent perishing of their language, but also to the isolation of the Highlands. Their loss and preservation, their authenticity and their forgery, come from the same moment of mediation.

The reference to 'an English dress' is very much loaded, given that 'After 1746, the tartan plaid was banned' (Stafford, ix). Macpherson laments that:

> The genius of the highlanders has suffered a great change within these few years. The communication with the rest of the island is open... Many have now learned to leave their mountains, and seek their fortunes in a milder climate; and though a certain *amor patriæ* may sometimes bring them back, they have, during their absence, imbibed enough of foreign manners to despise the customs of their ancestors. (51)

This dilution of tradition is ascribed to the impact of Union – 'the communication with the rest of the island is open' – and it is significant that this is a specific reference to military roads built to allow rapid troop deployment in the case of future rebellion. Peter T. Murphy considers these roads, along with the suppression of 'Highland garb' and of the Gaelic language, as 'methods of eliminating the crucial and dangerous difference of Highland culture' (568). But Macpherson presents them as two-way streets, opening opportunity to Highlanders though at the cost of that difference. 'A milder climate' and 'foreign manners' suggest that this reciprocal movement extends to Europe. Cosmopolitanism here threatens the dissolution of nation, demonstrating that Scottishness relies not only on the archaeology – or the forgery – of a proud ancient history, but equally on its loss. The Romantic project of the creation of nation equally depends on such loss, and the circulation of inhabitants, cultural materials, and 'fortunes' that is blamed for causing it, in the case of Ossian, provides an exemplary horizon for the future-directed formation of modern European states. Macpherson, for his purposes, also calls upon a collective national pride through an appeal to the same porous borders: 'It will seem strange to some, that poems admired for many centuries in one part of this kingdom should be hitherto unknown in the other; and that the British, who have carefully traced out