

# Introduction

## Enlightened Romanticism or Romantic Enlightenment?

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As eighteenth-century scholarship has expanded its range, both historically and in its consideration of more popular and less elite cultural artifacts, so has what used to be known as “Romanticism.” As a consequence, novels from about 1750 to 1833 have become a rich and contested site of critical overlap, with the 1790s as a particular locus of important work among scholars. While many individual scholars do attend both kinds of conference and write for a crossover audience, the old canonical construction of “Enlightenment” versus “Romanticism,” “Age of Johnson” versus “Age of Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Blake, and Byron” potentially limits critical exchange. The exigencies of the profession and the job market only tend to reinforce such limitations, as do many anthologies and ensconced course curricula.

This volume responds to this problem by inviting contributors who identify as scholars specializing in either the eighteenth century or in Romanticism, to address related writers and novels. This volume aims first, to open new and richer discussions of novels and novelistic concerns in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain. Secondly, by grounding our discussion in particular literary works, this volume acknowledges the necessity for dialogue across the scholarly boundaries of “eighteenth-century studies” and “Romantic studies.” Dominant narratives, critical approaches, and methodological assumptions may differ in important ways, but these differences also can reveal a productive tension. Rather than subsuming one into the other, this collection seeks to offer a model for augmenting each other’s work by placing into conversation essays on works legitimately incorporated under both “eighteenth-century studies” and “Romanticism.” The problems and possibilities of this dialogue are highlighted in this introduction, revealed in the essays’ engagement with each other’s concerns—including in some cases cross-references—and augmented by two concluding responses to the collection from senior scholars.

### **Long Centuries and Romanticism**

Some years ago the MLA Job Information List abandoned the designation “Romantic” and created an uproar on the NASSR (North American Society for

the Study of Romanticism) listserv (see NASSR-L postings from October 1997, <<http://listserv.wvu.edu/archives/nassr-l.html>>). At the insistence of respected senior scholars, the designation was reinstated, but the episode highlights a major source of scholarly anxiety about territory and periodization. What happens if one's specialty is absorbed into a larger period designation in this age of downsizing the university? What is lost when a conceptual organization such as "Romanticism" is elided into a diachronic period designation such as "the eighteenth century" or "the nineteenth century"?

As Susan Wolfson and William Galperin argued in their polemical argument for a "Romantic Century" from 1750 to 1850: "We think it impoverishing of the field to have it treated as the end-point of the eighteenth century (in which it is by definition marginal or ancillary) or as the adolescence of the nineteenth century. ... Rather, we must resist—or at the very least transform—these unsatisfactory impositions or annexations through an initiative of our own" ("The Romantic Century," <http://www.rc.umd.edu/reference/misc/confarchive/crisis/crisiisa.html>, accessed May 24, 2006). They continue:

The Restoration or High-Anglican hegemony that continues to inform eighteenth-century studies (and to underwrite, in the process, the long eighteenth century) is most evident in the way the "Age of Johnson" becomes an inevitable sub-division in the aftermath of Swift and Pope, obscuring the fundamental break that the year 1750 can be said roughly to demarcate. By mid-century, lest we forget, Young and Thomson were widely read and part of a climate of variousness, ranging from the Wartons (who, as Robert Griffin reminds us, actually anticipate the Romantics in declaring their independence from Pope and others) to the many women writers suddenly publishing—all of them part of a discursive field additionally thickened by developments in print culture and in movements of political unrest. Thus, the 50/50 area of concentration that we propose does more than simply contest the logic of the long eighteenth century and its reliance on the synecdochical and, from our position, arbitrary centrality of Samuel Johnson; it brings writing is (sic) the latter half of that century (in the manner of Marshall Brown's recent *Preromanticism*) into productive relation with those writers, texts and discourses on which it bears and with which it maintains crucial and compelling affinities. ("The Romantic Century")

Finally then, they propose a "Romantic Century" from 1750 to 1850, responding to their sense of being subsumed and simplified by seeking in turn to subsume and simplify.

Curiously, similar arguments about the "long eighteenth century" have emerged in the past on the C-18thList—the discussion list for ASECS members—debating the beginning and end points of the period, the usefulness of designations such as "Enlightenment," "Age of Johnson," "long eighteenth century," and even Georgian or Hanoverian. A concern that some designations might lead to reading an important literature as somehow a rehearsal for the real thing (for example,

“pre-Romantic” or “pre-history of the novel” or even “proto-novel”) also can be located among eighteenth-century scholars. (Curiously, many of us who work on the late eighteenth-century novel are familiar with Cambridge University Press’s “Cambridge Studies in Romanticism” as a useful series that publishes both members of ASECS and members of NASSR, and few eighteenth-century scholars note the tag “Romanticism.”) Less discomfort is usually apparent within any field for progressivist views that see that field as somehow special, unique, or the pinnacle of a valued propensity. No one, it seems, is disturbed to find her or his own area of specialization celebrated as the most important or most advanced.

Eighteenth-century studies has found itself occasionally at odds with proponents of movements—Augustanism, Age of Johnson, the Enlightenment, which seek to privilege certain kinds of writing or thought. But as a field defined by a historical century, however blurred the start and end dates may be, it suffers a milder identity crisis than Romanticism. With the expansion of the Victorian era backward to include the early nineteenth-century Chartist movement and pre-1837 reform bills, British Romanticism as a particularly short period risked disappearing altogether into merely authorial scholarship—the Wordsworth or Blake specialist—a subspecialty within the larger centuries to either side. Blake or Byron might safely be placed with other late eighteenth-century writers: Thompson and Cowper in poetry, or Godwin and Wollstonecraft in politics (and many anthologies in fact do this). Wordsworth, who was poet laureate under Victoria, and whose *Prelude* was only finally posthumously published, might be reclaimed as a kind of proto-Victorian, or so the fear went. The real drive, of course, was that graduate students specializing in Romantic literature found they had better be sure to document training in their “real” field of hire—the eighteenth or nineteenth century. As universities and colleges nationally and internationally try to do more teaching with fewer faculty, few of us can afford to specialize solely in a period of some 30 years when others cover full centuries. (Of course, those of us at small liberal arts institutions or at small public institutions have long been expected to cover more historical terrain in our teaching and sometimes in our scholarship—but the Research University remains the standard definer of the field and point of aspiration.) An expanding British eighteenth century—no longer safely contained as Augustanism or Age of Johnson, and with the novel no longer solely mapped from Defoe through the twin poles of Richardson and Fielding, but including the Gothic novel and Jane Austen—seems to threaten even more directly the newly-found territory of so-called “Romantic fiction.”

But should the demands of the job market determine our defense of a distinction between literary periods? Though period designations are, of course, largely conveniences for institutionalizing teaching and scholarship, they importantly shape the kinds of knowledge that we produce and claim; they are not precisely arbitrary, but rather reflect thoughtful affiliations and associations. Most such terms also are given after the fact by philosophers or scholars, and reflect the thinking of their time about a previous age; thus they are doubly historically telling, reflecting both on the period they define and the era that identified and

defined that period. The terms of literary period also carry with them their own ideological implications and shape our reading practices. The “Renaissance” means something different than either “the sixteenth century” or the “Early Modern period.” The “eighteenth century” replaces the “Enlightenment” as a way of both recognizing the continuities from the earlier seventeenth century through the 1780s and 1790s and casting suspicion on the teleology of progress embedded in the idea of “Enlightenment” itself. “Romanticism” too came under attack from internal critiques as “a discourse of false consciousness, of gender oppression, of an idealizing transcendence or self-blinding evasion of the political and social world, as a little too complacent in its aesthetics of complexity” (Susan Wolfson, “50–50? Phone a Friend? Ask the Audience?: Speculating on a Romantic Century, 1750–1850,” 5).

Comparing the “long eighteenth century” to “Romanticism” is comparing deeply incommensurate terms, the one a more inclusive and historically demarcated term, and the other more deeply ideological and prescriptive, seeking to distinguish work that is “Romantic” regardless of publication date. By focusing on narrative fiction, a genre strongly associated with turn-of-the-century British letters, but only recently emerging as engaged with a revised conception of “Romanticism,” in some sense we are seeking to create a conversation across quite different modes of categorization, and thereby implicitly examine principles of literary organization themselves.

### **Enlightenment or Eighteenth Century?**

As undergraduate students learn, the “Enlightenment” marks an era marked by a growing sophistication in natural philosophy and politics, a high valuation for reason as the source of all knowledge and authority, and in Britain, the growth of middling-class dominance. The “eighteenth century,” by contrast, is messier and less invested in conventional notions of progress and rationality. The “eighteenth century” allows for more attention to the relation of discovery and exploration to colonization and slavery, to the limitations of reason and the inclusion of other kinds of knowledge, to the popular and common in broadsides and ballads, and to mass events from Bartholomew Fair to the Gordon Riots. A preference for the term “eighteenth century” over “Enlightenment” thus suggests a claim to a larger historical arena and some allegiance or at least sensitivity to the critical moves associated with cultural studies, new historicism, and cultural history.

It is under the rubric of “the long eighteenth century” that we find included not just the Enlightenment and the Age of Johnson (ending ostensibly in 1784 with Samuel Johnson’s death), but also the Age of Sensibility. Usually associated with the latter half of the eighteenth century, particularly with the graveyard poets such as Thomas Gray and Edward Young and with the “man of feeling” exemplified in Sarah Fielding’s, Henry Mackenzie’s and Laurence Sterne’s work, sensibility is arguably found well before 1750. Many of its key elements appear fully formed

in Samuel Richardson's 1740 *Pamela*, in which the display of emotional internal states through external signs from blushes to upward rolled eyes and fainting fits constructs a language of feeling. One could argue that the embodied significance of nerves and sensibility begins even earlier, for example in George Cheyne's 1725 "Essay on Health and Long Life" or his 1733 *The English Malady*, or even with the Earl of Shaftesbury's 1711 "Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit" in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*. By the 1780s and 1790s, many scholars agree, some forms of sensibility had moved from fashionable to laughable, yet much literature of the period continues to explore the function of nerves and nervous responses, the language of embodied emotions, and evidences a concern with the surface signs of interior experience. Much of 1780s–1800s abolitionist discourse and literature depends upon eliciting the emotional response of the reader as an ethical response, while also demanding the use of logic and reason to recognize the humanity of non-European peoples. Conjoining affective sensibility with human reason seems to be a pressing project well before the French Revolution.

Scholars interested in the imbrication of feeling and sensibility throughout the second half of the eighteenth century might then reasonably object to beginning their investigations at the arbitrary date of 1785 (the date the current Norton Anthology gives for the beginning of English Romanticism), or 1789 (the beginning of the French Revolution). While the sensibilities evident in the works of Richardson, Fielding, Haywood, Smollett, Sterne, and Mackenzie differ in important ways from each other, there also are continuities from these writers through Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson, and William Godwin—even Wordsworth and P.B. Shelley. The advantage of thinking in terms of a "long eighteenth century" is that this implicitly encourages making these links and comparisons.

Efforts to distinguish eighteenth-century sensibility from nineteenth-century sentimentality often make a break between a mid-nineteenth-century Victorian sentimentality and a late eighteenth-century philosophically-inflected interest in portraying internal subjectivity through external signs (see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, New York, Methuen, 1986). One implication then of the term "the eighteenth century," as in the "American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies," is a sense of some coherence and continuity across the period beginning as late as 1700 and ending as early as 1799. "Enlightenment," "Age of Johnson" or even "Age of Sensibility" are more discrete and delimited categories, denominating not only a more modest chronological area, but also identifying particular aspects of interest: the progress of reason and knowledge, the impact and influence of Samuel Johnson and his coterie, or the valuation of feeling and affect evidenced in physical symptoms and external display. In this sense of expansiveness and inclusiveness, the "eighteenth century" is opposed to the more clearly ideologically and conceptually driven designation "Romanticism."

"Romanticism" in twentieth-century criticism has tended to distinguish a particular *zeitgeist*, from the inspirational sublime associated with the M.H. Abrams's version (see *The Mirror and the Lamp*, and the *Norton Anthology of English*

*Literature* up through the 6th edition of 1993 for the dominance of this view), to the changing ability to value and represent the poor and working classes found in E.P. Thompson's lectures on the Romantics (see *The Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age*, NY: New Press, 1997). These are older and overdetermined versions of Romanticism of course, but they still drive some undergraduate teaching and appear, if only to be questioned, in most literary anthologies aimed at classroom use (see the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th–8th editions for an interesting shift from 1993 to 2005, Mellor and Matlak's *British Literature: 1780–1830*, Wu's *Romanticism: An Anthology*, et al.).

"Is the Romantic sublime the fruition of eighteenth-century sensibility?" asks the "Dictionary of Sensibility" electronic project of the University of Virginia (<<http://www.engl.virginia.edu/enec981/termpages/sublime.html>>, accessed 1/5/2006). This provocative question highlights both a sense of continuity and a sense of a period break. The developing and changing concepts of sensibility throughout the eighteenth century, from Shaftesbury's conception of sympathy and Hume's moral sensibility, to Richardson's literary codification, to the weeping comedies of dramatists and the medical theories of nervous sympathies, find themselves anew in the emphasis on both the irrational passions of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and the rationally-balanced and communal responses of heroines in Ann Radcliffe's novels. On the other hand, where eighteenth-century sensibility sought to theorize an internal subjectivity, evidenced by external signs or legibly written on the body in tears, blushes and fits, varieties of the Romantic sublime revel in the joining of apparently incompatible feelings (pleasure and pain, terror and beauty) or their excessive and inherently private nature (the reader can only catch sympathetically a shadow of the poet's or writer's sensations). Surely the answer is not merely to privilege a continuous and composite eighteenth century over a Romantic "turn," but to put side by side the kinds of scholarship enabled by each approach and set them in dialogue.

## History of the Novel

Has the returning interest in historically grounded scholarship and the growing attention to narrative literature at the turn of the eighteenth century eliminated the value or specific insights generated by scholars trained as eighteenth-century or Romantic specialists? These are the questions this collection opens and addresses through grounded textual analysis and examples of work done under the auspices of both the long eighteenth century and Romanticist scholarship. As the territories claimed by scholars of the British eighteenth century and by scholars of British Romanticism continue to overlap and intersect, it seems of growing importance to ask in what ways scholarly approaches grounded in either the eighteenth century or with an allegiance to the "Romantic" may be understood as distinct or identifiable. What are the real scholarly costs and benefits to those of us who read at least some

of the same literature, but may or may not read the same scholarship, attend the same conferences, or publish in the same journals?

Scholarship published under the rubric of the British eighteenth century has long tended toward historicism and shown some regular suspicion toward an oppositionally constructed “theory” (or “system” in eighteenth-century parlance). The view of what historically-informed work should look like has changed, as the writings and perspectives of women, non-Europeans, the middling or working classes, and other marginalized peoples have been increasingly incorporated into study of the period. Nevertheless, a strongly historicist, not to say classicist, predilection still pertains to eighteenth-century studies, even as greater attention is granted to writers popular in their own day, but long considered peripheral to the core great tradition.

Moreover, the trajectory of the “novel” or of narrative prose has been central to contemporary study of the British eighteenth century, while a tendency to privilege lyric poetry has long defined British Romanticism.<sup>1</sup> Because the novel is notoriously difficult to define, cannibalistic and open to including most forms of narrative (travel narrative, didactic tale, lives or histories), it is a fitting emblem of a period in which writing proliferated, and although poetry retained its value as refined and elite literature, prose came to dominate. Further, the novel as it develops across the eighteenth century is usually strongly related to the growing significance of the middling sort and the public sphere of letters. For Romanticism, where the innovations of lyric poetry are definitive, the novel presents special problems because though there are arguable “new” forms such as the Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novel, the national tale, Evangelical moral tales, and loyalist fictions, it does not fit well with the story of a dramatic turn in literary sensibility carved by attending to particular poets read in particular ways.

A vein of historicism also is prevalent in Romanticist studies, but this has long been in strong tension with a dominant aesthetic that valued vision and inspiration, and particularly lyric poetry over narrative or historical writing. More politically and prose-oriented critics of Romanticism have often been the ones who invoked or called for historically engaged criticism (see E.P. Thompson, Marilyn Butler, Gary Kelly, Jon Klancher, et al.). Attention to work that appealed to a large and popular audience has also changed the face of Romantic studies, adding more work by women writers, more popular forms such as Gothic literature and narrative fiction, and incorporating other biographical modes to the conventions of the Romantic genius. Finally, the face of even high Romantic poetry has been dramatically changed by the advent of feminist and cultural criticism over the last 20 years. Not merely seeking to add “women writers” but to revision the world in which the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley came into being and the “sublime”

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<sup>1</sup> The dominance of the novel as a defining genre of the eighteenth-century is clearly due to Ian Watt’s 1957 *Rise of the Novel* and its respondents, but even in Virginia Woolf’s *Common Reader* essays we find the eighteenth-century novel central to her understanding of the period.

became a defining attribute, literary feminism began to reshape our understanding of Blake's importance, of Charlotte Smith's influence on Wordsworth, and of the significance of Della Cruscan poetry for the second generation Romantics, or even of the definition of the sublime itself (see Behrendt and Linkin, McGann, Wolfson, Mellor, et al.). Moreover, as the dominance of strict formalist approaches has waned, larger fields of writing and influence, of poetic and prose conversation have into view.

### The "Romantic Novel"

Recent scholarship has turned to the prose writing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and some scholars have claimed this as the "Romantic novel" (Gilroy & Verhoeven, Miles, Wolfson, Trumpener).<sup>2</sup> As Amanda Gilroy and Wil Verhoeven point out:

Ian Watt's authoritative account of *The Rise of the Novel* bypassed the fiction of this period, and revisionist histories of the novel have not substantively changed the habitual subordination of Romantic fiction to either eighteenth-century or Victorian novels. Michael McKeon is ... incurious about this era's fiction; Homer Obed Brown disputes the premature "institutionalization" of the novel, claiming that Watt and McKeon's work should be seen as "chapters in the pre-history of the novel" [xii]. But he, in turn, simply reverses the teleological narrative that drives most criticism of the novel by privileging Scott's naming of Fielding as "the first of British Novelists" [138], a move that validated Scott's own project. (Gilroy & Verhoven, "Introduction," *Novel* 34.2 [Spring 2001]: 149–50)

Thus, where eighteenth-century scholars have long been able to claim the novel as a generic sign of their period's importance and innovation, and Victorianists have countered by claiming their period as the natural apotheosis of the novel as a mature form, those interested in the novel between 1785 and 1832 have fallen between two stools.<sup>3</sup> Claiming prose fiction produced in these years as "Romantic" raises as many questions as it answers: is Romanticism merely a period designation or does it indicate some set of criteria by which we might so identify some prose narratives and exclude others? Is it adequate to search for the same thematic content

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<sup>2</sup> In 1999 Wil Verhoeven and Amanda Gilroy organized a conference at the University of Groningen on "The Romantic-Era Novel" that explicitly sought to explore the idea of the novel as Romantic. This was followed by a special edition of *Novel* in 2001 (vol. 34, no. 2 Spring 2001).

<sup>3</sup> See for extended discussion of this negligence on the part of both eighteenth-century studies and Romantic studies Claudia Johnson's "The Novel and the Romantic Century, 1750–1850," in *European Romantic Review* Special Issue: The Romantic Century: A Forum, ed. Susan Wolfson. 11.1 (Winter 2000): 12–20.

or linguistic styles associated with high Romantic poetry in these works? Or does the inclusion of prose writing revise our conception of “Romanticism” itself, and if so, does it bring the “Romantic” closer to the preceding period or enable more useful distinctions? I want to suggest that the essays in this volume do participate in an ongoing redefinition of British Romanticism, that the inclusion of not only prose fiction but other kinds of writing must enable us to rethink the salient and pressing features of literary culture, influence, and creation.

Building upon the expansion of British Romanticism to include important but neglected poets, from Felicia Hemans, Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith to John Clare, the turn to fictions is predictable. More novels were written in the late eighteenth century than ever before, and as feminist scholars have long argued, not all are so easily dismissed as in Gary Kelly’s fairly typical 1979 formulation: “There were no great novels published in England during the 1790s, but there were many interesting ones” (*The English Jacobin Novel*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976, 1).<sup>4</sup> From 1760 onward, Britain saw the expansion or emergence of the national tale, Gothic fiction, the political novel of purpose, didactic fictions, Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels, religious fictions, *romans à clef*, the novel of manners, the historical novel, philosophical romances, travel narratives, and many narratives that could be listed under several of these categories at once. Students of the novel have long found this era puzzling in its wealth of fictions, tied to the rise of a market for fiction and the expansion of the circulating library. While for eighteenth-century scholars, this is seen as the continuing expansion of forms and genres with roots earlier in the century, for Romanticists this growth seems more significant. If not the birth of a completely new form of literary art, there are distinct developments and divergences that seem important under the Regency.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> To be fair, Kelly does return to novels of this period in his later work, suggesting some revision of this position. See also J.M.S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800*, “Between the work of the four great novelists of the mid-eighteenth century and that of Jane Austen and Scott there are no names which posterity has consented to call great” (v). See Watt, 290, and Claudia Johnson, “‘Let me make the novels of a country,’: Barbauld’s *The British Novelists*.” (*Novel* 34.2 [Spring 2001]: 163–79). It is clear that it used to be *de rigeur* to open any discussion of 1790s novels and even early 1800s works other than those of Austen and Scott with an embarrassed disclaimer about their aesthetic failures. All further citations in this essay are to this edition.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Lipking associates eighteenth-century emphases on continuity with what he terms “philosophical historians” (as opposed to antiquarians, who insist upon the pastness of the past). Lipking explains: “the period has always attracted intellectuals in search of the moment when the modern world came into being, when the force of skeptical philosophy, or capitalism, or political justice, or the common reader could no longer be resisted. Romanticists may perceive the age of revolution as a sudden dawn, but those who believe in continuities will turn inevitably to the preceding age—to Adam Smith, Sir William Jones, or Condorcet. A number of the most influential works of modern scholarship, *The Great Chain of Being* and *The Mirror and the Lamp* among them, pause in the antechamber of the eighteenth century so long that the Romantic movement, when it finally arrives, may seem

In a simple sense, where eighteenth-century scholars see continuity and continuing development, Romantic scholars are often invested in the narrative of Romantic exceptionalism, a period of such rapid social and cultural change that literature bears the marks of a great cultural shift as well. An eighteenth-century scholar might read the novels of Jane Austen, placing particular emphasis on Austen's debt to Frances Burney or Charlotte Lennox, on her extension of a vein of satire found in Augustan poetry, and on the way in which works like *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility* both delight and instruct. An eighteenth-century scholar might focus, for instance, on how Elizabeth Bennet is ultimately rewarded for asserting her place as a gentleman's daughter, for learning to recognize the ways in which not only her mother, but her father fail to fulfill their parental obligations, for discovering Darcy's merit in the rational beauty and management of his estate, and for learning to balance her wit with a sense of gendered propriety. A Romanticist might, by contrast, attend to the ways in which the Napoleonic wars haunt the pages of *Persuasion*, that the nationalist Navy comes to seem more representative of British identity than the landed gentry, and how a deep feeling of melancholy is carefully delineated as signifying not only Anne's interior psychological depth, but her own situated difference from her family's celebration of surfaces. Both of these arguments have important explanatory force, and neither is simply and wholly satisfying, though both enable useful teaching.

One hope is that while the essays in this collection show this divergence in interesting ways, they also show that a simple distinction between eighteenth-century continuity and a Romantic turn is less evident than the freshman survey course or most survey-anthologies would lead one to expect. There is much to be gained from conversation and cross-publishing among long eighteenth-century and Romanticist scholars. Not least, the tensions evoked on the one hand by a powerful commitment to seeing 1789–1820 as a moment of generational assertion of difference, and on the other an investment in reminding us that literary innovations are both rooted in the past and falsely confident in their own newness, seem helpfully corrective.

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less a breakthrough than an afterthought. It is not accident that such works should have to think their way through the cogitations of eighteenth-century minds. Their very projects, their fascination with the way that ideas are modified, over the course of centuries, not only by individual thinkers but by something like a collective mind, derive from the philosophic historians who first began to grasp that ideas can have a history" ("Inventing the Eighteenth Centuries: A Long View," in *The Profession of Eighteenth-Century Literature: Reflections on an Institution*. ed. Leo Damrosch, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, 7–25, 16).

## History and Historicisms

One important tension between scholars of the eighteenth century and Romanticists has long been in their engagement with history and historical approaches. Despite the traditions of aesthetic and transcendental Romanticism, there is a strongly historicist branch of Romantic studies, exemplified particularly by scholars engaged with the political novel and with the regional or national tale (Marilyn Butler, Gary Kelly, James Chandler, Katie Trumpener, Anne K. Mellor, et al.). However, the historicist approach in many ways predictably *dominates* scholarship of the eighteenth century and has done so even through the years of the “linguistic turn.” Turning for a moment to the over-determined association of the 1700s with Enlightenment, it stands to reason that students of a period of British literature that is powerfully tied to developments in philosophy and natural sciences that seek to enable human beings to negotiate their relations with the social and natural world would show a strong investment in the belief in Enlightenment. This is true, I suggest, even though the impact of critiques of “Enlightenment” such as Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* has been powerful. Such a critique is in fact only significant if scholars of the period have themselves remaining powerful investments in the principles and beliefs of the era that they study.<sup>6</sup>

Castigated as an academic area that remained largely untouched by the revolutions of structuralism and poststructuralism in the 1970s and 1980s, eighteenth-century studies was arguably strongly impacted by the advent of New Historicism and the shift of Renaissance studies to Early Modernism. If the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were now “early Modern,” then the eighteenth century was not simply Enlightenment, but the hey-day of modernity. (Not inconsequentially, both the Romantic and Victorian eras lay claim as well to being the foundations of modernity, and they do so often by repudiating the period that precedes them.)

Historicist approaches to literature and literary studies take several forms. In the first, and perhaps the most common, history is treated as a kind of ground or context from which to examine the more elusive functioning of literature. This can be as simple as opening a text with a brief biography of the author, or as complex as choosing supplementary materials on important historical events and movements—as many literary anthologies seek to do with sections on “the woman question” or “the slave trade.” In this approach, history is treated as a matter of factual information, added to the study of literature to enable the reader to situate the artistic productions within their appropriate home. This kind of approach often makes important distinctions between the apparently stable period of Hanoverian

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<sup>6</sup> For discussion of the tendency for scholars of particular movements to share the biases and investments of those movements, and particularly for eighteenth-century studies’ investment in rational empiricism, see John Bender, “Eighteenth-Century Studies” in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, NY: MLA, 1992, 79–99.

rule and the unstable Regency, between Enlightenment Whiggish Britain and the both radical and reactionary period following the French Revolution. Such oversimplified historical narratives are particularly useful for undergraduate surveys, hence the frequency with which they appear in anthologies, augmented by the practice of breaking anthologies into smaller “splits” edited by different scholars and frequently broken physically to mirror the “break” between eighteenth-century literature and the Romantic era.<sup>7</sup>

Another way in which historicist approaches function is as a counter-balance to “theory.” In this situation “theory” is usually understood as twentieth-century high theory, informed by poststructuralism. Critics who identify as historicist often see themselves as battling against an overly systemic, speculative, and ahistorical group of “theorists” who engage in special pleading, read texts “against the grain,” and are overly invested in seeking out psychoanalytic, feminist, or race-inflected (i.e., “politically interested”) readings of works. In eighteenth-century studies theoretical approaches are strongly associated with Foucauldian arguments, feminist and queer theory approaches; fine distinctions between Foucauldian cultural historicism and other politicized cultural or historical approaches, varieties of feminism, or historically-grounded explorations of sexual history are often lost in the heat of these debates (an example of this kind of defensive elision was evident in Martin Battestin’s Plenary address on “Historical Criticism and the Question of Contemporaneity” given at the 30th Annual Meeting of ASECS, March 24–28, 1999).<sup>8</sup> The anxiety elicited by a fear of overly speculative, abstract, or even French “theory,” and the need to protect eighteenth-century studies from such intrusions seems in part to be a resistance to the overly emotional, speculative celebration of inspiration that some eighteenth-century scholarship associates with Romanticism, and from which it seeks to keep the Enlightenment untainted.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The physical break between individual volumes of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* and the *Longman Anthology of British Literature* are quite conventional in their placement of writers on one side or the other. By contrast, anthologies dedicated solely to one period or the other are instructive in which authors are included in both kinds of anthologies. For instance, shared between Robert DeMaria’s well-received *British Literature 1640–1789* (2nd edition, 2001) and Duncan Wu’s *Romanticism: An Anthology* (1995, 3rd edition, 2005) are the commonly “Romantic” Cowper, Paine, Burke, Barbauld, More, Smith, Crabbe, Yearsley, Crabbe, Blake, and Burns. Curiously, DeMaria includes Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Man*, while Wu includes William Godwin’s *Political Justice*—both clearly as more contextual material than properly literary. Romantic anthologies alone tend to include Charlotte Smith, Anna Seward, while eighteenth-century anthologies are more likely to include Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, James MacPherson, Henry Mackenzie, Frances Burney, and Thomas Chatterton. Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* does not appear in Wu’s anthology, though he does appear in others.

<sup>8</sup> Since published in *Age of Johnson* 12 [2001]: 361–79.

<sup>9</sup> For a useful exploration of the 1980 “theory wars” in the U.S. academy and the British reaction to the French Revolution’s celebration of “system” or “theory” as contrasted with a homegrown “commonsense,” see David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and*

In Romantic scholarship a kind of comfort with poststructuralist approaches is more evident, sustained by the impact of Paul DeMan and his students on the field, though it is more commonly found in critics who work primarily with poetry or who work across national boundaries. The influence of Kantian aestheticism matters here too. For Romanticism, the turn to historicist approaches and away from formalist dominance or poststructuralist-inflected readings is suggestively laid out in the introduction to Ian Haywood's and Zachary Leader's *Romantic Period Writings 1798–1832*:

The impetus behind the 'return to history' of much recent criticism of the period can be seen as a reaction in the North American academy to the perceived dehistoricizing tendencies not only of New Criticism but of post-structuralism and deconstruction. ... Following McGann's lead [in *The Romantic Ideology*], New Historicist critics have ingeniously—if sometimes tortuously—sought to reconstruct an absent or displaced historical content in canonical Romantic texts. ... A somewhat less contentious aspect of the New Historicism, its recovery of repressed voices (as opposed to themes or content), is obviously forwarded by this book, with its selections from women writers, working-class poets and polemicists, and black radicals. All historicist approaches to literature of this period owe a debt to the work of Raymond Williams, in particular *Culture and Society 1780–1850*. ... In this pioneering study of the evolution of the concept of culture over the last two centuries, Williams eroded the boundary between text and context, pushed the 'big six' poets to the margins of his discussion, and located the 'Romantic artist' as an aesthetic response to new modes of literary production—thus paving the way for more recent critical orthodoxies. (Note 5, 214)

This footnote reveals a nervousness about searching for historical (or political) content in Romantic verse, and settles on the “less contentious” effort to include more voices in anthologies and presumably the study of the period. Raymond Williams's work is recontained as the founder of “critical orthodoxies” which attend to changes in literary production at the turn of the century. Certainly attending to the narrative fictions of 1780–1827 aims to create a larger view of the literary landscape of this era. Including women writers, non-European writers, and working class writers *has* begun to change the picture of the era in important ways, though in anthologies lyric poetry and some narrative poetry remain the dominant genres represented. However, refusing to examine the ways in which literary texts themselves participate in producing “history” and insisting on the externality of the historical and the political to literary work as this introduction does is not only

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*the Revolt Against Theory*. For related work on the changing significance and valuation of “imagination” and “fancy” see John Whale, *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789–1832: Aesthetics, Politics, and Utility* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), and John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793–1796* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

strongly formalist/aestheticist; it is troubling in its assumption that history is the empirical ground to the literary-creative, rather than itself a representational field, produced and constructed through myriad discursive modes.

Since the 1990s, approaches associated with New Historicism or with Cultural History have become more dominant in both the long eighteenth century and in Romanticism. Critics affiliated with these approaches tend to emphasize material culture, print history, consumer culture and popular reception history in their work; not surprisingly, the novel as a largely realist form is more likely to be privileged in their writing. The impact of this turn in critical emphasis is particularly clear in the recent 8th edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (general editor Stephen Greenblatt), most explicitly the Romanticism volume (Vol. D). This new stand-alone volume, edited by Deidre Lynch and Jack Stillinger, now begins not with Blake but with Anna Barbauld, Mary Robinson, and Charlotte Smith, and contains context sections on “The Revolution Controversy and ‘the Spirit of the Age’” and “The Gothic and the Development of a Mass Readership.” The online materials and quizzes for the whole edition are strongly oriented to cultural history and away from traditional emphases on formalist and aesthetic devices. Given the *Norton Anthology’s* status as the most commonly assigned anthology for undergraduate teaching in the U.S., and its tendency to reflect changes in academic scholarship only after they become well-established, this is more significant than the earlier efforts by competitor anthologies to include less-studied writers and more prose or historical material. This turn to historicist criticism, not merely as a kind of author-centered context of “life and times,” but as foundational to understanding the period’s literature, has the effect of drawing together critics specializing in the eighteenth century and/or the Romantic novel. Foregrounding issues of political upheaval and cultural debates, representing the materiality of changing cities, developments in philosophy and science, and the expansion of empire, the genre of the novel becomes more representative rather than less. This generic shift in literary studies of 1750–1832 makes a rapprochement between eighteenth-century scholars and Romanticists interested in narrative fiction more necessary than ever before.

### **The Romantic Turn**

Duncan Wu wrote in 1998, “were one to point to what might be considered distinctive of the moment [of Romanticism], it would be this: that unquenchable aspiration for universal betterment, the reclaiming of paradise” (“Introduction” to *Romanticism: An Anthology*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1998, second edition, xxxv). This association of Romanticism with revolution, human inspiration and aspiration, the noumenal and the transcendent, has long dominated the concept of “Romanticism” itself. Although this formulation is problematic for the study of the novel, leave alone the parodies, essays, political treatises, and literary criticism of the period, it must still be reckoned with. Robert Kiely’s 1972 *The Romantic Novel*

*in England* argued that the novelists were problematically Romantic because: “they tried to introduce the unnamable into a genre which derived much of its strength from an insistence on naming names” (12). In other words, the novel is presumed to be fundamentally a realist form (following Ian Watt’s influential formulation in *The Rise of the Novel*): the problem of the Romantic novel is that after the Romantic turn, it becomes a genre working against its natural generic principles, hence the burgeoning Gothic, or the excessive sensibility of even political works. More recently Robert Miles adhered to the notion of a Romantic turn, even as he sought to identify the ideological functions of the Romantic novel. He gives three definitions for the Romantic novel, with the third suggesting that “the ‘Romantic novel’ refers to that subset of novels written during the period that somehow encode, in their form, in their textual marrow and sinews, the genetic material driving the period’s cultural transformation” (“What Is a Romantic Novel?” *Novel* 34.2 [Spring 2001]: 183).

This investment in a cultural shift from something prior to something alternately identified as Romanticism (or sometimes simply modernity), has long been a defining feature of Romantic criticism and the Romantic era itself. Advocates for a strong “Romantic turn” often point to period writings which emphasize the “spirit of the age” or the sense of newness: “bliss it was in that dawn to be alive,/ But to be young was very heaven” (Wordsworth, *Prelude*, 10.693–4). The essays in this volume tread lightly on this assumption: the strength of this presumed shift, its location in time, its significance for the readings offered, and even its content vary widely among the critics writing here. Examining the range of novels published in Britain through the late 1700s and early 1800s reveals even more clearly than the poetry of the time strains of both a belief in living in a period of great change and fear that these changes represent as much a loss as a gain. Moreover, scholars focused on the novel are necessarily less clearly invested in a strong Romantic turn, and more attuned to the ways in which expanding concepts of readership, authorship, the popular, and the margins of the empire come to matter.

One important shift from Kiely’s position appears here in the tendency not to assume Watt’s “formal realism” as the dominant identifier of the novel as a genre (see Helene Moglen, *The Trauma of Gender*, 2001). Instead, we find the assumption that novels are more heteroglossic, comfortably incorporating didactic instruction, fantastic and romance elements, psychological exploration, nationalist propaganda, and voicing that subverts their own purposes. Curiously, the essays in this collection do not engage with some of the most common representatives of the Romantic-era novel: Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Walter Scott, or even Jane Austen. Instead we find Eliza Haywood keeping company with Elizabeth Hamilton, Charlotte Smith together with Frances Trollope and Laurence Sterne. Jane West stands in for the more expected Mary Wollstonecraft, and Amelia Opie and Thomas Holcroft are both present. Thus, this collection expands the kinds of narratives we might consider as contenders for the “Romantic novel,” while insisting on the long eighteenth-century perspective that situates Smith, Holcroft,

Hamilton, West, Opie, and Trollope with Haywood, Locke, Gray, and Sterne, as well as Burke in an ongoing cultural dialogue.

### The Essays

This collection presents the reader with textually-focused essays, each written by a scholar primarily associated with the long eighteenth century or the Romantic period, and each engaged with its own terms of analysis and scholarly investments. Some of the essays reveal tropes that are recognizably “Romantic” much earlier than 1789 (Case Croskery, Walmsley), while others note the continuation of Enlightenment principles even in solidly nineteenth-century writings (King, Flynn). Moving roughly, but not entirely chronologically, these essays engage the eighteenth-century novel’s development of emotional interiority (including theories of melancholia), the troubling heritage of the epistolary novel for the 1790s radical novel, tensions between rationality and romantic affect in didactic traditions, generic hybridity and interpolation, and approaches to the burgeoning British empire that go beyond either Grand Tour self-congratulation or Romantic enthusiasm for the exotic. These essays refuse an easy opposition between an eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideology consisting of rationality, propriety and progress and a Romantic ideology identified by inspiration, heroic individualism, and sublime emotionality, tracing the putatively “Romantic” into the early 1700s and the long legacy of Enlightenment values and ideals into the nineteenth century. Although not all of the essays in this collection programmatically trace the persistence of eighteenth-century attitudes into Romanticism, or of Romantic sensibilities in the earlier eighteenth-century, through their sensitivity to the concerns of the “other” and their situated proximity between these covers, they do produce more flexible and nuanced readings of works that might have been engaged more narrowly. In so doing, these essays contribute to reconsidering the history of the novel beyond the local textual concerns of each.

The collection opens with Margaret Case Croskery, a scholar of Eliza Haywood, who contentiously situates that contemporary of Defoe and Fielding as in tenor and feeling “Romantic” in her late novel, *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. Along the way this essay rethinks the strong association between Romanticism and the post-French Revolutionary period. Peter Walmsley’s essay on “The Melancholic Briton” delves into the philosophical roots of the Gothic, uncovering the long-standing engagement in the 1700s with death and death-thoughts that precede the “invention” of the Gothic in Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* or apotheosis in the works of Ann Radcliffe. Imagination and the mournful pleasures of contemplating death are revealed as deeply intertwined with a key strand of explicitly British nationalist identity. Scott Campbell’s essay touches upon problems of genre and mystery, the Gothic elements of textual art and of political contexts, and the lingering impact of epistolarity in Charlotte Smith’s revolutionary novel, *Desmond*. Genre-mixing again comes to the fore in Julie Shaffer’s examination

of Elizabeth Lester's *The Woman of Genius*, as both a sign of and tied to problems of gender and race/ethnicity through a focus on the newly defined "woman of genius." Daniel Scheirenbeck turns to the deeply loyalist novelist Jane West, to show how her narratives reject romantic affect and embrace rational education, thereby rethinking what identifies "Romantic" fiction itself.

Although women writers and female heroines tend to dominate scholarship on late century novels, two essays here turn instead to formulations of masculinity that are also under pressure in the 1790s. Shawn Lisa Maurer compares the functions of Enlightenment models of male friendship in *Hugh Trevor* and *Caleb Williams*, situating affective masculine affiliation in a long eighteenth-century tradition descended from Addison and Steele, while contrasting Holcroft's affective tone with Godwin's darker vision. Shelley King also engages neglected questions of masculinity by focusing on dueling as a parallel to the female marriage plot in Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*.

The final essays examine narrative journeys beyond Britain. Christopher Flynn introduces the genre of travel narrative into his examination of the nineteenth-century novel and travels of Frances Trollope, exploring how Burkean conceptions of the sublime and beautiful become associated with a British view of the new world landscape that the American heroine must interpolate. Tara Ghoshal Wallace examines Elizabeth Hamilton's *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* for the work's expansionist imperialism, but also its incipient critique of British degeneracy, attending to the novel's ventriloquized and doubled voicing.

There are two major approaches represented here by these essays. Several essays show the value of approaching material strongly associated with one period through the lens of the other (Case Croskery, Walmsley, Maurer, Flynn). Others seek to engage the richness of this prose tradition, invoking subgenres, influences, marginalized and appropriated voices, and influences in their essays as pertinent, often without making strong period arguments (Schierenbeck, Campbell, King, Shaffer, Wallace). Several essays engage with ongoing public civil debates without arguing either for origin studies or late-century exceptionalism. Taken together, these essays all suggest that we need other ways of understanding the usefulness of terms such as "Romanticism" and "Enlightenment" if we are to develop an adequate appreciation for 1750–1830 British narrative fiction. The varieties of prose produced during these decades explode too easy categorization as "bourgeois," "radical," or "conservative," leave alone "realist," "Romantic," "imperialist" or "Gothic."

Attending to the ways in which concern for imagination, the passionate, the melancholic, and the individual are significant throughout 1700s, the essays by Case Croskery and Walmsley implicate writers and works conventionally read in the context of the eighteenth century with tropes associated with Romanticism. Walmsley's essay traces a particular construction of the British subject as melancholic, deeply Gothic in its anxiety about the linkage between the body and the mind, its Franco-phobia, and its sense that the dead haunt the passions of the living from writings by Addison, Young, and Sterne. The Gothic here, is not a new

or breaking genre, but the logical outcome of a longer tradition at a moment of particular cultural crisis: “there is a wide vein of graveyard writing in eighteenth-century Britain that can rightly be called Gothic” (52, this volume).

On the other hand, some of these essays seek to challenge conventions associated strongly with one period or the other: the dominance of epistolary fiction, the emergence of the Gothic, didactic or conduct writing, travel narrative as both critique of the home country and as evidence of the speaker’s refined sensibilities. In Scott Campbell’s essay the problems of using fiction and fictional genres as vehicles for political truth are explored with *Desmond* as the key text. Campbell’s essay highlights the ways in which Smith’s novel is both attempting to move beyond traditions of epistolary genre and entrapped by those long eighteenth-century traditions. Daniel Schierenbeck’s essay on Jane West’s *The Advantages of Education*, situates West’s work both within a politically complex debate on educating women and as an effort to reject “romance” while critiquing non-religious “Enlightenment.” Shawn Lisa Maurer takes as given the long eighteenth-century tradition of male-friendship that can be liberatory for at least some men, rather than identifying passionate male friendships as part of a “Romantic turn.” Shelley King rereads *Adeline Mowbray* as more than a *roman à clef* about Godwin and Wollstonecraft, tracing a continuing concern with civility and gallantry in the practice of the duel. From Samuel Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* onward, the problems of gendered honor and the tradition of the duel formed a critical debate about gentlemanly behavior; King throws new light on this debate by reading the masculine problem of the duel against the feminine problem of marriage and chastity. Julie Shaffer’s approach to *The Woman of Genius* is more solidly Romanticist, but highlights the way in which a wide range of pressing issues from generic complexity to racial and ethnic identity are engaged in this late and obscure novel. This essay participates in the recovery of forgotten and popular novels, enabled by the increased attention to late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century fiction on both sides of the period debate.

Travel narrative is another key genre that spans the usual divide. While the Grand Tour, that *locus classicus* of elite enlightenment education, does not surface here, travel as both educational and as participating in the consolidation of the British empire does. Tara Ghoshal Wallace’s essay turns Scottish reformer Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* inside out, revealing not only the expected exoticization of India and the rational argument for “enlightened” British rule in India, but also revealing how the novel by giving the “hindoos” their own voices is able to represent Britain as the site of degeneracy as well. Cutting both ways and reflecting in both directions, Hamilton’s novel as Wallace reads it participates both in justifying Romantic imperial expansion and in Enlightenment critique of political corruption at home. Christopher Flynn’s essay on Frances Trollope’s travel narrative finds traces of conventionally Enlightenment tropes lingering in works produced long after the usual period distinction. This may be read in part as the long influence of the Enlightenment, lingering particularly in prose and philosophy through the early nineteenth century, and arguably in the familiar form

of human rights arguments into our own twenty-first century. Certainly there is much evidence that changes in a *zeitgeist* or large cultural shifts do not simply take place overnight, and earlier systems tend to linger in ways that are well-documented.

These chapters reveal ways in which any strict distinction between eighteenth-century literary traditions and Romantic literary traditions delimits the rich and complex readings of the works examined here. As Margaret Case Croskery writes, “Haywood’s novel thematizes an essentially Romantic stance to the absorptive pleasures of fiction at both the level of form and content” (23, this volume). This phrasing begs the question: what is it that we mean by “Romantic” and what does it mean if this is the best terminology that we can find to name the valuation and didactic significance of passion in *Betsy Thoughtless*? What is added here to the conventions of eighteenth-century scholarship on narrative tradition that is usually bracketed as “Romantic”? A concept of Romanticism marked by a “turn” or break from a past cast as eminently rational, neo-classical in its values, and restricted to polite society serves particular purposes for academic scholars. It serves, as Jerome McGann’s *Romantic Ideology* implied, Romantic scholarship itself, but perhaps also some kinds of Enlightenment scholarship, by setting aside texts and problems that demand a more complex and nuanced account of narrative literature. Retaining a strict eighteenth century/Romantic divide by constructing discrete and self-contained areas with their own anthologies, syllabi, conferences, journals, and curricular assignments may serve undergraduate education, but it cannot serve serious scholars of the British novel well.

Placing these wide-ranging essays in direct conversation, this collection invites the reader to form her or his own judgment about the elucidating power of cross-period scholarship or more simply reading across historical borders with period lenses. In either case, the essays in this volume unsettle any easy definition of the “Romantic novel” or the “long eighteenth century” novel tradition(s). Finally, they suggest that the metaphor of dialogue and conversation is productive for exploring the variety of British novels from 1750 to 1830, and more true to the struggles that produced this fiction. Concepts such as the long eighteenth century and the Romantic era are most useful when they remain suggestive, fluid, and open to re-visioning, as they do here.