

4 The Romantic period, 1780–1832

PETER J. KITSON

This overview of the history of the Romantic period provides a narrative of the major social, political and cultural trends which occurred between the years 1780 and 1832 and which impacted on the literature produced by the men and women who lived through them. The Romantic period witnessed enormous political and social upheaval with such political events and social processes as the American and French Revolutions, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the prosecution and criticism of the transatlantic slave trade, the Great Reform Act of 1832, the Industrial Revolution, and much more. In this period Britain relinquished its American Colonies but found a new empire in other parts of the world, transforming itself into a global superpower. The Romantic Age saw a wholesale change in the ways in which many people lived and this was reflected in the culture of the time. It was a time when Britons forged a new national and imperial identity defined against the cultures and peoples of the world that they encountered in accounts of travel, exploration and colonial settlement.

Chronology

	HISTORY AND CULTURE	LITERATURE
1776–84	American War of Independence	
1784	Act for regulating East India Company	Charlotte Smith, <i>Elegiac Sonnets</i>
1785	William Pitt introduces Bill for reform of Parliament William Paley, <i>Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy</i>	William Cowper, <i>The Task</i> Robert Merry (Della Crusca), <i>The Florence Miscellany</i> Sir William Jones, ‘A Hymn to Na’ra’yena’
1786	Thomas Clarkson, <i>An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species</i> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> Impeachment proceedings against Warren Hastings John Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery	Robert Burns, <i>Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect</i> William Beckford, <i>Vathek</i>
1787	Formation of a Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade Mozart, <i>Don Giovanni</i>	

1788	<i>The Times</i>	
1789	Fall of the Bastille <i>Bounty</i> mutiny Wilberforce introduces twelve resolutions against the slave trade Richard Price, <i>Discourse on the Love of Our Country</i>	William Blake, <i>Songs of Innocence</i>
1790	Edmund Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> Immanuel Kant, <i>Critique of Judgment</i> James Bruce, <i>Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile</i>	Ann Radcliffe, <i>Sicilian Romance</i> Joanna Baillie, <i>Poems</i>
1791	Thomas Paine, <i>Rights of Man</i> , Part One Birmingham Church and King Riots Louis XVI flees to Varennes Galvani publishes results of electrical experiments with frogs' legs	Erasmus Darwin, <i>The Botanic Garden</i> Mary Robinson, <i>Poems</i> (–1793)
1792	Abolition of French monarchy and Republic declared September massacres London Corresponding Society formed Commons resolves on gradual abolition of slavery by 1796 Boycott of sugar begins Thomas Paine, <i>Rights of Man</i> , Part Two William Gilpin, <i>Essay on Picturesque Beauty</i> Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>	Smith, <i>Desmond</i> William Blake, engravings for John Gabriel Stedman, <i>Narrative, of a five years' expedition, against revolted Negroes of Surinam</i>
1793	Execution of Louis XVI Britain	Blake, <i>America; Visions of the</i>

	<p>and France at war</p> <p>Beginning of French Terror</p> <p>Macartney's embassy to China</p> <p>William Godwin, <i>Political Justice</i></p> <p>Hannah More, <i>Village Politics</i></p> <p>Board of Agriculture established</p>	<p><i>Daughters of Albion</i></p> <p>Smith, <i>The Old Manor House</i></p> <p>William Wordsworth, <i>Descriptive Sketches; An Evening Walk</i></p>
1794	<p>Execution of Robespierre</p> <p>French Republic outlaws slavery in all French Colonies</p> <p>Treason trials</p> <p>Habeas corpus suspended</p>	<p>Blake, <i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i></p> <p>Godwin, <i>Caleb Williams</i></p> <p>Radcliffe, <i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i></p>
1795	<p>French Directory established</p> <p>Food riots</p> <p>George III's carriage stoned at opening of Parliament</p> <p>Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Acts</p> <p>Methodist secession</p> <p>Joseph Haydn, <i>London</i> Symphony</p> <p>James Hutton, <i>Theory of the Earth</i></p>	<p>Maria Edgeworth, <i>Letters for Literary Ladies</i></p> <p>Hannah More, <i>Cheap Repository Tracts</i></p>
1796	<p>Napoleon's Italian campaign</p> <p>Turner's first oil paintings exhibited</p> <p>Edward Jenner's first smallpox vaccination</p> <p>Beckford builds Fonthill Abbey</p>	<p>S. T. Coleridge, <i>Poems on Various Subjects</i></p> <p>Matthew Lewis, <i>The Monk</i></p> <p>Robinson, <i>Sappho and Phaon</i></p> <p>Anna Seward, <i>Llangollen Vale</i></p> <p>Anne Yearsley, <i>The Rural Lyre</i></p>
1797	<p>Naval mutinies at Spithead and Nore</p> <p>Invasion scares</p>	<p>Radcliffe, <i>The Italian</i></p> <p>Smith, <i>Elegiac Sonnets</i> (new edition)</p>

	British naval victories at Camperdown and Cape St Vincent	
1798	France invades Switzerland Napoleon's expedition lands in Egypt; Battle of the Nile Irish rebellion suppressed Thomas Malthus, <i>Essay on the Principle of Population</i> Edgeworth, <i>Practical Education</i> Haydn, <i>The Creation</i> Godwin, <i>Memoirs of the Author</i>	Baillie, <i>A Series of Plays</i> Coleridge, <i>Fears in Solitude</i> ; <i>France: An Ode</i> ; <i>Frost at Midnight</i> Wordsworth and Coleridge, <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>
1799	Napoleon becomes First Consul Six Acts against radical activities Introduction of income tax Rosetta Stone discovered	Lewis, <i>Tales of Terror</i> Seward, <i>Original Sonnets</i> Wordsworth, <i>Two-Part Prelude</i> (MS)
1800	Act of Union with Ireland (takes effect 1801) Volta generates electricity Beethoven, First Symphony	Robinson, <i>Lyrical Tales</i> Wordsworth and Coleridge, <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> (2nd edn with 'Preface') Edgeworth, <i>Castle Rackrent</i>
1801	Pitt resigns over Catholic Emancipation Henry Addington becomes Prime Minister First census of England and Wales Thomas Jefferson elected President of the USA	Robert Southey, <i>Thalaba the Destroyer</i> Robinson, <i>Memoirs</i>
1802	Napoleon restores slavery in the French Empire Peace of Amiens <i>Edinburgh Review</i> founded Paley, <i>Natural Theology</i>	Walter Scott, <i>Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border</i> (-1803) Baillie, <i>Plays of the Passions</i> (II)
1803	War resumes with France Richard Trevithick builds first working railway steam engine	Darwin, <i>Temple of Nature</i> Thomas Chatterton, <i>Collected Works</i>

1804	Pitt returns as Prime Minister Napoleon crowned Emperor	Blake, <i>Milton</i> Ann and Jane Taylor, <i>Original Poems for Infant Minds</i>
1805	Napoleon victorious at Austerlitz Battle of Trafalgar Death of Horatio Nelson William Hazlitt, <i>Essay on the Principles of Human Action</i> Richard Payne Knight, <i>Principles of Taste</i>	Scott, <i>Lay of the Last Minstrel</i> Wordsworth <i>The Prelude</i> (completed in MS.) Mary Tighe, <i>Psyche; or, The Legend of Love</i>
1806	Death of Pitt Ministry of All the Talents formed Death of Fox Napoleon defeats Prussians and establishes trade blockade of Britain	Robinson, <i>Poetical Works</i>
1807	Act passed for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Colonies France, Russia and Prussia conclude Treaties of Tilsit Humphry Davy isolates sodium and potassium Geological Society founded	Wordsworth, <i>Poems in Two Volumes</i> Lord Byron, <i>Hours of Idleness</i> Thomas Moore, <i>Irish Melodies</i> Smith, <i>Beachy Head</i> Charles and Mary Lamb, <i>Tales from Shakespeare</i>
1808	Peninsular War begins Adam Dalton, <i>New System of Chemical Philosophy</i> Davy isolates magnesium, strontium, barium and calcium	Scott, <i>Marmion</i> Felicia Hemans, <i>England and Spain</i>
1809	<i>Quarterly Review</i> founded First use of gas-lighting in central London	Byron, <i>English Bards and Scotch Reviewers</i> More, <i>Coelebs in Search of a Wife</i>
1810	George III permanently insane	Baillie, <i>The Family Legend</i>

		George Crabbe, <i>The Borough</i> Scott, <i>The Lady of the Lake</i> Seward, <i>Poetical Works</i>
1811	Prince of Wales becomes Regent	Jane Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
	Luddite Riots Percy Shelley, <i>The Necessity of Atheism</i>	Tighe, <i>Psyche with Other Poems</i>
1812	Assassination of Prime Minister Spencer Perceval Napoleon invades Russia United States declares war on Britain Elgin marbles arrive in London Toleration Act	Baillie, <i>Plays of the Passions (III)</i> Anna Laetitia Barbauld, <i>Eighteen Hundred and Eleven</i> Byron, <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I and II</i> Crabbe, <i>Tales</i> Hemans, <i>Domestic Affections</i>
1813	Napoleon loses at Leipzig	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
	East India Company monopoly ended Toleration Act for Unitarians Execution of Luddite leaders Leigh Hunt imprisoned for libelling Prince Regent	Shelley, <i>Queen Mab</i> Byron, <i>The Giaour; The Bride of Abydos</i> Coleridge, <i>Remorse</i>
1814	Napoleon abdicates and exiled to Elba Restoration of French monarchy Congress of Vienna Robert Stephenson builds steam locomotive	Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i> Byron, <i>The Corsair; Lara</i> Leigh Hunt, <i>Feast of the Poets</i> Scott, <i>Waverley</i> Wordsworth, <i>The Excursion</i>
1815	Napoleon escapes from Elba. Battle of <i>Waterloo</i> Corn Law passed Davy designs safety lamp	Byron, <i>Hebrew Melodies</i> Wordsworth, <i>Poems</i> Thomas Love Peacock, <i>Headlong Hall</i>
1816	Economic depression	Austen, <i>Emma</i>

	<p>Spa Fields Riots</p> <p>Elgin marbles purchased by British Museum</p> <p>Amherst Embassy to China</p> <p>William Cobbett, <i>Political Register</i></p>	<p>Byron, <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage III</i>, Coleridge, <i>Kubla Khan</i> Scott, <i>The Antiquary</i> Shelley, <i>Alastor</i></p>
1817	<p>Pentridge uprising</p> <p>Habeas Corpus suspended</p> <p>Manchester 'Blanketeers' march to London</p> <p><i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i></p> <p>David Ricardo, <i>Principles of Political Economy</i></p> <p>James Mill, <i>History of British India</i></p>	<p>Byron, <i>Manfred</i></p> <p>Coleridge, <i>Sibylline Leaves; Biographia Literaria</i></p> <p>Hazlitt, <i>Characters of Shakespeare's Plays</i></p> <p>John Keats, Poems</p> <p>Thomas Moore, <i>Lalla Rookh</i></p> <p>Shelley, <i>Laon and Cythna</i></p> <p>Southey, <i>Wat Tyler</i></p>
1818	<p>Habeas corpus restored</p> <p>Defeat of Sir Francis Burdett's motion for parliamentary reform</p>	<p>Austen, <i>Northanger Abbey; Persuasion</i></p> <p>Byron, <i>Beppo; Childe Harold's Pilgrimage IV</i></p> <p>Hazlitt, <i>Lectures on the English Poets</i></p> <p>Keats, <i>Endymion</i></p> <p>Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i></p>
1819	<p>'Peterloo Massacre'</p> <p>Six Acts</p> <p>Factory Act</p> <p>William Lawrence, <i>Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man</i></p> <p>Theodore Ge'ricault, <i>The Raft of the Medusa</i> Schubert, <i>The Trout Quintet</i></p>	<p>Byron, <i>Don Juan I and II</i></p> <p>Crabbe, <i>Tales of the Hall</i></p> <p>Hemans, <i>Tales and Historic Scenes in Verse</i></p> <p>Scott, <i>Ivanhoe; The Bride of Lammermoor</i> Shelley, <i>The Cenci</i></p> <p>Wordsworth, <i>Peter Bell: The Waggoner</i></p>
1820	<p>Death of George III</p>	<p>John Clare, <i>Poems Descriptive of Rural Life</i></p>

	<p>Accession of George IV Trial of Queen Caroline for adultery</p> <p>Cato Street Conspiracy</p> <p>Hans Christian Oersted discovers electromagnetism Royal Astronomical Society founded</p>	<p>Keats, <i>Lamia and Isabella; The Eve of St Agnes and other Poems</i></p> <p>Lamb, 'Essays of Elia'</p> <p>Charles Robert Maturin, <i>Melmoth the Wanderer</i></p> <p>Shelley, <i>Prometheus Unbound</i></p> <p>Wordsworth, <i>The River Duddon</i></p>
1821	Greek War of Independence	<p>Baillie, <i>Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters</i></p> <p>Byron, <i>Cain; Sardanapalus; Don Juan III–V</i></p> <p>Clare, <i>The Village Minstrel</i></p> <p>Thomas De Quincey, <i>Confessions of an English Opium-Eater</i></p> <p>Shelley, <i>Adonais; Epipsychidion</i></p>
1822	Castlereagh commits suicide	<p>Byron, <i>The Vision of Judgement</i></p> <p>Hemans, <i>Welsh Melodies, 'Songs of the Cid'</i> Shelley, <i>Hellas</i></p> <p>Wordsworth, <i>Ecclesiastical Sketches</i></p>
1823	<p>Mechanics Institute founded <i>The Lancet</i> appears</p> <p>Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland meets</p>	<p>Byron, <i>The Age of Bronze; The Island; Don Juan VI–XIV</i></p> <p>Hazlitt, <i>Liber Amoris</i></p> <p>Hemans, <i>The Siege of Valencia and Other Poems</i></p> <p>Mary Shelley, <i>Valperga</i></p> <p>Scott, <i>Quentin Durward</i></p>
1824	<p>Repeal of Combination Act gives trade unions right to exist</p> <p>National Gallery founded</p>	<p>Byron, <i>Don Juan XV–XVI</i></p> <p>James Hogg, <i>Confessions of a Justified Sinner</i></p>

	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals founded <i>Westminster Review</i>	L. E. L. (Letitia Elizabeth Landon), <i>The Improvisatrice</i> Scott, <i>Redgauntlet</i>
1825	Stockton–Darlington Railway opens Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge founded	Barbauld, <i>Works</i> Hazlitt, <i>The Spirit of the Age</i> Hemans, <i>The Forest Sanctuary</i> L. E. L., <i>The Troubadour</i>
1826	London Zoological Society founded	Hazlitt, <i>The Plain Speaker</i> M. Shelley, <i>The Last Man</i> Scott, <i>Woodstock</i>
1827	George Canning becomes Prime Minister Death of Canning University of London founded	Clare, <i>The Shepherd's Calendar</i> Alfred Tennyson, <i>Poems by Two Brothers</i>
1828	Duke of Wellington becomes Prime Minister Repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts Schubert's Ninth Symphony	Hemans, <i>Records of Woman</i> Hunt, <i>Lord Byron and Some Contemporaries</i>
1829	Catholic Emancipation Robert Peel creates metropolitan police force	Hogg, <i>The Shepherd's Calendar</i>
1830	Death of George IV and accession of William IV Earl Grey's Whig reforming government 'Captain Swing' rural riots	Hemans, <i>Songs of the Affections, Records of Woman</i> Scott, <i>Tales of Grandfather, Part III</i>
	Opening of Manchester–Liverpool Railway Foundation of the Royal Geographical Society July Revolution in France	Tennyson, <i>Poems, Chiefly Lyrical</i>

	Greek independence secured Coleridge, <i>On the Constitution of the Church and State</i> Cobbett, <i>Rural Rides</i> Charles Lyell, Principles of <i>Geology</i> vol. I	
1831	National Union of the Working Classes founded Slave revolt in Jamaica Michael Faraday discovers electromagnetic induction	M. Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> (2nd edn) L. E. L., <i>Romance and Reality</i> Ebenezer Elliot, <i>Corn-Law Rhymes</i> Peacock, <i>Crotchet Castle</i> Mary Prince, <i>The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian-Slave</i>
1832	Passage of the Great Reform Act Morse invents the telegraph	Tennyson, <i>Poems</i> De Quincey, <i>Klosterheim, or The Masque</i>

Historical overview

Culture and society

At the beginning of the Romantic period, Britain was still an agrarian economy with much of the population employed as rural workers or in domestic service; by the end of the period it was a rapidly industrialising nation with mushrooming towns and cities. In the eighteenth century there was no real class-consciousness; Britain had a limited aristocracy (much smaller than most European nations), a substantial rural gentry and what were referred to as the 'middling sorts': professional people, merchants and rural and urban workers. By 1830 something like a modern class-consciousness had emerged with more clearly identifiable upper, middle and working classes. Notions of rank, order, degree and station based on birth became supplanted by groupings of landlords, capitalists and labourers. In the late eighteenth century the population of the British Isles began to grow dramatically. Between 1771 and 1831, the population of England more than doubled from 6.4 million to 13 million. In Scotland the population rose from something like 1.3 million in the mid-eighteenth century to 2.4 million by 1831. Never before had the population risen so markedly over such a short period of time. Historians still argue about the reasons for this explosion but whatever the reason it changed British society for ever. The increasing size of the population expanded the labour force, as well as the demand for goods and services. Economically this was beneficial, as a larger labour force reduced the cost of labour and of the goods and services produced, which, in turn, accelerated the industrial process. As well as aiding industrialisation, the growth in population also contributed to the process of urbanisation, or the phenomenon of the

increasing concentration of the population in large cities and towns. In 1770 less than one-fifth of the population lived in an urban community; by 1801 the proportion had risen to over one-third and by 1840 it was almost one-half. In the 1750s London and Edinburgh were the only cities in Britain with in excess of 50,000 inhabitants; by 1801 there were eight towns of over that size and by 1841 there were twenty-six. The great commercial, industrial and manufacturing cities of London, Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford increased exponentially in size. By the mid-nineteenth century, for good or for ill, Britain had become the world's first urbanised society. The factory towns of England tended to become rookeries of jerry-built tenements, while the mining towns became long, monotonous rows of company-built cottages, furnishing minimal shelter. The unhealthy living conditions in the towns can be traced to lack of good brick, the absence of building codes, and the lack of machinery for public sanitation; but they were also due to the factory owners' tendency to regard workers as commodities, or 'hands', and not as a group of human beings.

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution is defined as the application of power-driven machinery to the manufacturing of goods and commodities. In the eighteenth century all Western Europe began to industrialise to some extent, but in Britain the process was most highly accelerated. The reasons for this are several. Britain had large deposits of coal still available for industrial fuel. There was an abundant labour supply to mine coal and iron, and to man the factories. From its established commercial empire, Britain had a fleet and possessed colonies to furnish raw materials and act as captive markets for manufactured goods. Tobacco merchants of Glasgow, and tea and sugar merchants of London and Bristol, had capital to invest and the technical expertise to exploit it. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the use of machines in manufacturing was already widespread. In 1762 Matthew Boulton built a factory which employed more than six hundred workers, and installed a steam engine to supplement power from two large waterwheels which ran a variety of lathes and polishing and grinding machines. In Staffordshire an industry developed giving the world good cheap pottery; chinaware brought in by the East India Company often furnished a model. Josiah Wedgwood was one of those who revolutionised the production and sale of pottery. Improvements in the textile industry also occurred. In 1733 John Kay patented his flying shuttle allowing weaving to proceed more quickly. In 1771 Richard Arkwright's 'water frame' was producing yarn. About the same time, James Hargreaves patented a spinning jenny on which one operator could spin many threads simultaneously. Then in 1779 Samuel Crompton combined the jenny and the water frame in a machine known as 'Crompton's mule', which produced quantities of good, strong yarn. By 1840 the labour cost of making the best woollen cloth had fallen by at least half. The first modern steam engine was built by Thomas Newcomen in 1705 to improve the pumping equipment used to eliminate seepage in tin and copper mines. In 1763 James Watt began to make improvements on Newcomen's engine, changing it from an atmospheric to a true 'steam engine'. In 1774 Michael Boulton took Watt into partnership, and their firm produced nearly five hundred engines before Watt's patent expired in 1800. The factory was now freed from reliance on

water power.

In addition to a new factory-owning bourgeoisie, the Industrial Revolution created a new working class. The new class of industrial workers included all the men, women and children labouring in the textile mills, pottery works and mines. Often skilled artisans, such as the 'handloom weavers', found themselves degraded to routine process labourers as machines began to mass produce the products formerly made by hand. Generally speaking, wages were low, hours were long and working conditions unpleasant and dangerous.

The transport system improved considerably throughout the period. The spread of turnpike roads made it possible to transport goods and materials quickly throughout the year. From the 1760s onwards, the canal system reduced the costs of haulage. The revolution in transportation was completed by the beginnings of the railway system. By the mid-nineteenth century railway trains travelling at 30 to 50 miles an hour were not uncommon, and freight steadily became more important than passengers.

4.1 Industrial Revolution: Joseph Wright, '*An Iron Forge 1786*'. This picture shows men at work in a small iron-forge, with the forge-master's extended family looking on. At a time when most artists presented a thoroughly nostalgic vision of rural work, focusing on traditional agricultural tasks, Wright was quite exceptional in depicting scenes of modern industry. Its dramatic light effects create an almost religious atmosphere, and by showing the various generations of the family together Wright alludes to the traditional theme of the 'ages of man'.

There were substantial changes in agriculture as the countryside was transformed. Agrarian capitalism reached a period of development and crisis in the early nineteenth century with the growth of a class of agricultural workers who possessed only their labour to sell to tenant farmers. The period sees the decline of the independent smallholder (often idealised as the 'yeoman' class), movingly presented in Wordsworth's representations of what he referred to as 'Cumbrian statesmen', such as Michael from his *Lyrical Ballads*. The open-field system of cultivation gave way to compact farms and enclosed fields. Bogs and fens were drained, adding to the availability of land suitable for cultivation. Propaganda for the new agriculture was largely the work of Arthur Young. In 1793 the Board of Agriculture was established with Young as its secretary. Although a failure as a practical farmer, he was a great success as a publicist for scientific agriculture. Changes to the lifestyle of the rural worker were often bitterly resented. The loss of customary rights, occasioned by enclosure, and the reduction in the value of wages led to dissatisfaction and unrest, culminating in resistance, rioting and rick-burning. Alternatives to this form of agrarian capitalism were broached. Thomas Paine's *Agrarian Justice* (1796) claimed that land rights derived from commonality and argued for a land tax to militate against rural poverty. Radicals like Thomas Spence and his followers went further, arguing for the redistribution of land and the wealth derived from it.

Eighteenth-century Britain became a society with a marked difference between two spheres of activity, the public and the private. There developed an expanding public sphere of political, civil and intellectual life, typified, in particular, by the growth of the

coffee house as a venue for reading and debating information. In contrast, the private sphere involved family life and the care and education of children. These two spheres were gendered as masculine and feminine. Notions of gender also underwent a redefinition in the period, largely due to the growth in the mode of sensibility, which influenced all aspects of culture. Sensibility was very much a middle-class and commercial culture which stressed the fineness of feelings. Women were possessed of sensibility to a greater extent than men, because their nerves were considered to be finer and thus capable of delivering more delicate feelings. Likewise, it was argued that women should devote themselves to the domestic life and not interfere in the public sphere. They were the guardians of morality but not of political action. It was also feared that sensibility, with its stress on fine feeling and emotion, might lead to men becoming feminised. Similarly with the growth of Evangelical religion in the latter half of the century, the stress on the woman at the centre of family life increased. Denied participation in the world of public affairs, women were nevertheless meant to act as the moral guides to men and to set the moral and religious tone for the household. The period is also generally known as one in which the authoritarian and patriarchal family gave way to a more closely entwined unit held together by the values of affective individualism, based on respect, loyalty and filial obedience. While retaining patriarchal control and authority, fathers were obliged to take more interest in their children's lives and education.

Enclosure

Enclosure refers to the conversion of common land and strip-based open-field farming into compact and contained holdings enabling more efficient and sustained farming. This process, which occurred piecemeal and incrementally, had begun in the late medieval period (see p. 128) but was vastly accelerated in the eighteenth century and especially in the Romantic period. Each action of enclosure required parliamentary approval, and between 1762 and 1844 more than 2,500 Enclosure Acts were passed, encompassing over 4 million acres of land. The enclosing of common lands contributed vastly to the increase in agricultural productivity, but this was only achieved with massive dislocation and distress to large numbers of the rural population. The process benefited the larger farms and landowners who saw rents increase with the productivity of their lands. Large sections of the rural population were increasingly vulnerable to pauperisation with the increase of seasonal unemployment and the lessening of opportunities for female and child labour. The customary access of the landless to grazing land, gleaning, peat-cutting, firewood, fishing and game was lost. This loss was especially hard when rural wages were in decline and it was bitterly resented. The poetry of Clare, Goldsmith, Crabbe, and Wordsworth articulates a strong dissatisfaction with the process and its implications for the rural poor. The process was also sometimes violently resisted with rioting, the destruction of hedgerows and the burning of ricks.

Some argue that popular culture came under threat in the early nineteenth century. Not only did the gap between elite and plebeian culture appear to widen, but popular pastimes, customs and morality were scrutinised by a bourgeois class possessed of reforming zeal, both utilitarian and Evangelical. The culture of sensibility, with its

concomitant attempt at the reformation of manners, is important here, as is the religious revivalism of the evangelicals and their commitment to good works and strict morality. There were attempts to regularise and control activities such as pugilism, bull-baiting and cockfighting, and increasing regulation of public spaces, including the coffee house, dramshop and inn. Popular festivities such as the maypole and morris dancing were discouraged and Sunday Schools and religious processions encouraged. The Society for the Suppression of Vice (1802) targeted gambling and drinking as activities to repress. Popular culture was a wide-ranging field of activity which crossed notions of polite and vulgar, elite and plebeian, pre-industrial and modern. It was formed from both print and oral cultures, the Bible, hymns, chapbooks, almanacs, newspapers, romances, gallows speeches and so on. It manifested the survival of superstitions and beliefs involving popular millenarian thought of vulgar prophets such as Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott, as well as activities for self improvement, especially in the artisan classes by such figures as the radical tailor Francis Place.

The place and function of visual art in an increasingly commercial and industrialised world also troubled the age. The market for some kinds of art works began to spread beyond affluent aristocratic circles. The Royal Academy was founded in 1768 with Sir Joshua Reynolds as its first president. It became the nation's most powerful institution for the visual arts with forty full and twenty associate members. The Academy organised classes for its students as well as an annual exhibition of paintings, sculpture and drawings by British artists in the splendid halls of Sir William Chambers's neo-classical masterpiece, Somerset House. It sought to support young artists and raise the standard of public taste. In 1805 the British Institution was founded to showcase the works of contemporary British artists. Various commercial galleries were also established, reflecting the commodification of art for a middle-class market. The most notable of these was John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, which opened in 1786 in Pall Mall, exhibiting new paintings from Shakespeare that were then engraved for prestigious editions of the plays.

The highest genre of oil painting was that of the history painting, what Reynolds called 'the grand style', depicting figures from the Bible, mythology, or national history. In particular, the period saw a number of contemporary subjects reflecting Britain's military and naval success. Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) is often regarded as an exemplar of this. In France, Jacques-Louis David produced works commemorating recent events in the grand style such as *The Tennis-Court Oath* (1791), the *Death of Marat* (1793) and *Napoleon at St Bernard* (1800). Other genres such as portraiture, landscape and still life also increased in prestige. The genre of landscape painting was elevated in the period. The two most important British landscape painters were John Constable and J. M. W. Turner. Constable developed a series of agricultural landscapes from his native Stour valley in Suffolk, the most famous of which are *Flatford Mill* (1817) and *The Hay Wain* (1821). Turner produced a huge opus of incredible variety. He is also known for his extensive landscape paintings and his evocation of the sublime and apocalyptic (as opposed to Constable's predilection for picturesque beauty). Turner's main rival in the sublime was the Newcastle painter John Martin, who produced spectacular works illustrating the Bible, Milton and Roman history in the 1820s such as *Belshazzar's Feast* (1826), *Manfred on the Jungfrau* (1817), *Paradise Lost* (1827) and

The Fall of Babylon (1831). Philippe Jacques de Loutherberg essayed a series of sublime industrial landscapes, including his *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801). Another key artist of the period, Henry Fuseli, was Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy for two periods (1799–1805 and 1810 to his death). His work eschewed the concern with history and the public for a depiction of the tragic, sublime and extreme emotions of love, hate, revenge, jealousy and alienation, such as his paintings for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and his famous pre-Freudian depiction of the *Nightmare*. The Academy was dominated by male artists but females such as Maria Cosway, Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffman did exhibit there. Many artists chafed against what they saw as the Academy's dominance of the art world. Both James Barry and the engraver William Blake decried the stultifying influence of those like Reynolds who prescribed rules for art. Blake produced his small and highly symbolic experimental pictures for sale to his select patrons.

Although not a part of the fine art market as such, topical political prints were extremely popular and contributed substantially to the political debate of the 1790s and beyond. Key caricaturists such as James Gillray, George and Isaac Cruickshank and Thomas Rowlandson, though not known as individual artists, produced large numbers of hand-coloured etchings on political events, sold to the public in print-shop windows and exhibitions. Typically such prints would contrast British freedoms, with a well-fed John Bull, against French liberty, with its vicious and starving *sans-culottes*. They demonstrated a fear of French democracy and popular movements at home, savagely caricaturing Whig leaders such as Charles James Fox and other contemporary reformers.

Belief and thought

The canonical Romantic poets were building upon and reacting against the thought of their predecessors, sometimes breaking with the major trends or alternatively pushing that body of thought into more extreme positions than were usual in the Enlightenment. The writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment imagined themselves as emerging from centuries of darkness and ignorance into a new age enlightened by reason, science and a respect for humanity. The most celebrated exponent of this doctrine in the late seventeenth century was the British physician and philosopher John Locke. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) laid the foundations of an Enlightenment theory of mind. Locke dismissed the notion of both neo-Platonists and Rationalists that there existed in the human mind certain innate or *a priori* ideas. He compared the human mind to a blank sheet of paper upon which experience writes, or to an empty cabinet which experience fills. The human mind is thus originally passive, and knowledge is arrived at by relating the ideas left in the mind by sensation. Locke distinguished two types of experience: sensation, the mind's perception of the world, and reflection, the mind's perception of its own operation. By reflecting upon simple ideas the mind is able to generate ideas. To account for this process, Locke developed the theory of the 'association of ideas', by which knowledge of an object is built up from the simple ideas of perception.

Immanuel Kant is said to have effected a 'Copernican revolution' in European thought and laid the foundations for the Romantic idealism of Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey and Thomas Carlyle in Britain. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant argued by an

exhaustive process of deduction that all knowledge derives from experience yet it is dependent on *a priori* or, in his terms, 'transcendental' structures in the mind, such as the concepts of space and time. For Kant, such concepts were present in the mind and not absolutes of experience. He was thus led to distinguish between that which is knowable, the representation of the object in the human mind, and that which is unknowable, the pure object or the 'thing-in-itself' (*Ding an sich*). As well as the concepts of space and time, Kant argued that notions of God, freedom and eternity were likewise part of the transcendent realm, unknowable in themselves, but necessary for us to make sense of reality. The attraction of Kant's philosophy for Coleridge and the Romantics was that it assigned an active and creative role to the mind in the formation of human knowledge. Furthermore, Kant allowed an important role for the artistic imagination which had been somewhat restrained in the empiricist tradition. He distinguished between three kinds or powers of imagination. The first is the *reproductive imagination*, which is close to the Lockean mode of the association of ideas. The second is the *productive imagination*, which operates between sense perception and allows us to carry on the work of discursive reasoning. The third is the *aesthetic imagination*, which is free of the laws which govern the understanding and which works through symbols. Kant's threefold distinction corresponds to Coleridge's famous division of the powers of the mind in chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria* into the *fancy*, the *primary imagination* and the *secondary imagination*.

The Romantic period likewise witnessed a transformation in ideas about science. In the eighteenth century, this body of thought and practices was known as 'natural philosophy', an enquiry into the powers and phenomena of the natural world, demonstrating the splendours of God's creation. By the end of the period the modern term 'scientist' had been coined (by William Whewell) and the notion of the scientist as a professional investigator of the natural world, working in a specialised discipline with institutional support and a network of colleagues, was accepted. The nineteenth century saw the divergence of knowledge into separate disciplines, supported by discrete associations and bodies with distinct and specialised agendas and instruments. The Royal Society, under the presidency of Sir Joseph Banks, conservatively continued to prefer applied science over theoretical questioning and resisted the creation of individual bodies such as the Linnean Society (1788), the Geological Society (1807), the Astronomical Society (1820) and the Zoological Society (1826). In 1831 the British Association for the Advancement of Science was formed with the intention of co-ordinating the work of the separate societies. The period witnessed many key developments in scientific discovery. There were major advances in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, optics, electromagnetism and biology. Natural philosophy became a battle ground for conservatives and reformers. Joseph Priestley famously allied science with political reform when commenting that 'the English hierarchy (if there be anything unsound in its constitution) has equal reason to tremble even at an air pump, or an electrical machine'. Similarly, French science, especially chemistry, was anathematised by Edmund Burke as seditious.

In the field of the physical sciences unity of electricity, chemistry and magnetism was demonstrated. A 'chemical revolution' was under way, with the identification of new varieties of airs and the discovery of their different chemical properties. In the 1790s,

John Dalton proposed that the proportions of gases mixed in the atmosphere depended on their 'atomic weights'. His insights led him to the atomic theory of matter for which he would be remembered. Alessandro Volta's invention of the electric pile, or battery, in 1800 created a device capable of delivering a steady stream of current through material substances. This development was taken up by Sir Humphry Davy, who, in a series of barnstorming lectures at the newly founded Royal Institution, demonstrated the spectacular powers of electricity in breaking down physical materials. Davy, a poet and friend of Coleridge, believed in a dynamical chemistry, holding that power rather than matter was the fundamental force in the universe. In 1820 Hans Christian Oersted proved the long-suspected link between electricity and magnetism. Davy's disciple Michael Faraday discovered the crucial link between electricity and magnetism by making an electric wire rotate around a magnet. William Sturgeon took this discovery further when he later developed the tool of the electromagnet. Back in the 1780s Luigi Galvani, in a series of experiments at the University of Bologna, investigated the relationship between electricity and animation by applying an electric current to the leg of a frog. He coined the term *animal electricity* to describe whatever it was that activated the muscles of his specimens. The phenomenon was dubbed 'Galvanism'. Galvani's nephew, Giovanni Aldini, popularised his discoveries in a series of sensational lectures in London.

4.2 With the development of batteries and electrical machines and instruments, electric currents were put to a variety of uses. Here a small girl is being given electric therapy. Frontispiece of George Adams, *An Essay on Electricity, Explaining the Theory and Practice of that Useful Science; and the Mode of Applying it to Medical Purposes*.

Geology was a comparatively new science in the period and underwent rapid development. The subject was still dominated by biblical chronology, and major thinkers were interested in reconciling the geological record with the history of the world and its peoples as set out in scripture. This was becoming a more difficult task. The history of the earth was increasingly revealed to be much older than the four thousand or so years suggested by the Bible. To explain the formation of the earth there were also various hypotheses. The 'Neptunists' led by Abraham Gottlob Werner argued that the rock formations were a product of precipitation by an ancient ocean over a long period of time. This argument could be reconciled to the biblical notion of the Flood. The 'Vulcanists' believed that some of the rocks of the earth's surface were formed more quickly by igneous or volcanic action, although they stopped short or entirely contradicting Neptunist thought. The 'Plutonists', led by the Scottish geologist James Hutton, argued that, although rocks might be formed by sedimentation, it was the force of pressure and heat below the surface of the earth which accounted for the present geological structure of the world. For Hutton, geological time was immeasurably long and not confined by the dictates of scripture.

Methodism
Methodism was a movement begun in the eighteenth century as a religious society that wished to reform the Church of England from within. By force of circumstance it became separate from the Anglican Church and took on the characteristics of an autonomous institution. The movement was founded by John Wesley, an Anglican clergyman. Wesley, along with his brother Charles, had undergone an intensely

emotional religious experience in 1738. Some months later John Wesley was invited to come to the city of Bristol and help to preach to the colliers of Kingswood Chase, just outside the city, where living conditions were poor. This open-air preaching marked the beginning of the Methodist Revival. Under the leadership, at first of George Whitefield and afterwards of Wesley, the movement rapidly gained ground among those who felt themselves neglected by the Church of England. Wesley claimed to have reinstated the biblical doctrines that a man may be assured of his salvation and that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is capable of attaining perfect love for God and his fellows in this life. In spite of Wesley's wish, conflicts, chiefly over the right to ordain ministers, led to the separation of Methodism from the Church of England in 1795, four years after his death. The Wesleyan Methodist Church grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century, the growth being largest in the expanding industrial areas. The fervid emotionalism of the brand of Christianity practised by John and Charles Wesley has often been likened to the stress on feeling and passion to be found in all the canonical Romantic poets. In religious thought there was a renewed stress on the individual's personal relation to God.

The origins of human life and the place of humanity in the natural order also vexed natural philosophers. The science of comparative anatomy made great strides, with detailed studies of the relationship of human beings to the rest of the natural world. Unorthodox ideas concerning evolution were advanced. In France, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck argued that organisms could slowly adapt to their environment, and that modifications of their organs and biological structure could be passed on through heredity. In Britain such controversial notions were more tentatively broached. Lord Monboddo, for instance, believed that humans had evolved from apes and lost their tails in the process. The chief proponent of the evolutionary hypothesis, however, was the remarkable polymath, Erasmus Darwin. Darwin was a member of the progressive Lunar Society of Birmingham which included in its membership Thomas Day, Richard Edgeworth, Matthew Boulton, James Watt and Joseph Priestley. In a series of publications, *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), *The Economy of Vegetation* (1791) and his treatise *Zoonomia* (1794), he hypothesised that humanity had evolved over a period of millions of years from simple organisms or 'filaments'. The anatomist and surgeon William Lawrence, in his *Lectures on Physiology* (1819), developed the analogy between humans and animals bred to further certain physical characteristics, deemed to be valuable. Evolutionary ideas, though regarded with great suspicion, if not horror, by the scientific establishment were being discussed as an alternative account of the natural world to that provided in scripture.

The Evangelical Revival

Evangelicalism, or the renewed faith in a Gospel-based Christianity, had its origins in the early to mid-eighteenth century. Evangelicals believed in the importance of preaching the Word to all. This was, in part, a response to the growing attractions of deism (the belief in a rational deity deduced from the evidence of nature) as well as a broadly latitudinarian Anglican theology which stressed the importance of achieving salvation through good works. Evangelicals, by contrast, believed passionately in the scriptures and in the fallen nature of humanity and its essentially sinful nature. They stressed the importance of an emotional experience of being born again through

Christ, emphasising the importance of grace and of their personal relationship with God. They possessed a strong belief in the fundamental tenets of Christianity, such as the resurrection and the virgin birth. In the Romantic period, the most significant Evangelical group within the Anglican Church was the Clapham Sect, centred on the church of Clapham in south London. Its members included John Venn, the Rector, William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, James Stephen and Zachary Macaulay. Many were Members of Parliament, where, in addition to their abolitionism, they worked for prison reform, prevention of cruel sports, and the suspension of the game laws and the lottery. They supported several missionary and Bible societies, financed Hannah More's schools and pamphlets, and published their own journal, *The Christian Observer*. The Claphamites, mostly wealthy Anglicans, were politically conservative and appealed to the rich as the Methodists did to the poor. Derisively nicknamed the 'Saints', they exerted a powerful influence on the governing circles of English society and were, in part, responsible for the reformation of manners that occurred within the Regency period. Evangelicals were also strongly opposed to the transatlantic slave trade.

The institution of the established Church itself was also considered as under threat in the later eighteenth century. There was a strong perception that it had become inert and remote from people's lives, staffed by absentee clerics who accepted generous stipends and spent their time in leisure pursuits. In many ways the Romantics responded to the new currents of feeling that arose in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as a reaction to the aridity of much enlightened rationalist thought.

The late eighteenth century was also a time when religious sects, usually organised around charismatic individuals and espousing apocalyptic brands of mystical thought, multiplied. William Blake was, for a time, attracted to the writings of the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg and attended the New Jerusalem Church of his disciples in Eastcheap before repudiating Swedenborgian teachings in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790). Various millenarian prophets and sects arose in the 1790s, identifying the French Revolution with the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Most notable were the popular prophets Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott, but they were only two of many. This reading of political events in terms of biblical prophecy attracted both plebeian and polite audiences. Enlightenment notions of deism and scepticism also continued throughout the Romantic period. Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (Part I (1794); Part II (1795)) demystified Christian orthodoxy, seeking to establish a pure deism. Paine regarded the Bible as a mixture of poetry and 'trash'. Joseph Priestley, in numerous works, attempted to purge Christianity of its 'corruptions' and re-establish a pure Christianity which was fully compatible with the dictates of reason. Priestley became a Unitarian Christian who believed in the full humanity of Christ. His work was profoundly influential on the early Coleridge. More radical thinkers such as William Godwin and Erasmus Darwin proposed a materialist and deterministic account of nature and of the mind, and they regarded religion as the response of primitive societies to the forms of a nature whose workings they could not comprehend.

Politics, power and ideologies

In the late eighteenth century a growing consensus for the reform of the British political system was beginning to emerge. In the 1780s Britain was still a mainly agrarian country and the landed interest was predominant, despite the rapid growth of urban centres. The country was governed in the interests of some two hundred powerful aristocratic families (represented in the House of Lords) and below them a landed gentry (the 'country gentlemen') of some 12,000 families. These families effectively controlled government at central and local levels. The executive element of government involved the monarch, who nominated the Prime Minister, who in turn had at his disposal substantial powers of patronage to buy and reward supporters of the government. Substantial numbers of parliamentary seats were decided by nomination or influence. The electoral system was inconsistent and had numerous anomalies, with the effective disenfranchisement of the growing urban centres. In over fifty of the borough seats, the electorate was composed of fewer than fifty people. Defenders of the constitution argued that, despite its failings, the system worked and represented virtually, if not in reality, the key interests of the country. Our modern notion of political parties did not exist; instead, governments were formed by a coalition of alliances, often based on personal followings and enhanced by the power of patronage. A number of attempts to begin the process of reform of the system were made. These were overshadowed by events across the Channel when, in 1789, the French Revolution appeared to end for ever absolute monarchy and feudalism in France. At first the Revolution was welcomed in Britain, but with the increase in political violence, followed by the outbreak of war, many turned against the Revolution and its democratic principles.

After 1792, those in Britain who supported the ideals of the Revolution and political reform more generally were claimed as 'English Jacobins' and subject to persecution. Faced with the growing extremism of the Revolution and the rise of popular radicalism at home in the form of groups such as the London Corresponding Society, the Whig opposition split and its more conservative members, under the Duke of Portland, formed an alliance with the Prime Minister, William Pitt, leaving around fifty or so more radical reformers led by Charles James Fox. Pitt's government became increasingly pre-occupied with the possibility of revolution at home, leading it to institute the 'treason trials' of 1794 in which a number of leading radicals were unsuccessfully arraigned for high treason. Despite this failure a number of repressive measures such as the 'Two Acts' which extended the law on treason and which attempted to clamp down on public meetings were passed into law in 1795. The government was also preoccupied with events in Ireland, where the United Irish Society, under the leadership of Wolfe Tone, had been formed to press for reform of Irish constitutional arrangements. In Ireland a Catholic peasantry was exploited by a largely absentee Protestant landowning class, and ruled by a corrupt parliament that mainly took care of British interests. In 1796, an intended French invasion of Ireland failed to materialise but led to a policy of brutal repression in 1797–8, in turn occasioning an abortive rebellion by the United Irishmen. A further consequence of the rebellion was the Act of Union of 1800 which brought Ireland under the auspices of the British Parliament.

4.3 James Gillray, *Un Petit Souper à la Parisienne: or A Family of Sans Culottes refreshing after the fatigues of the day*. Gillray's horrific depiction of a family of French *sans-culottes*, a lower-class revolutionary family, takes up Edmund Burke's charge against the Revolutionaries as cannibals, consuming the ordered fabric of society. Gillray's cartoon was composed in response to the slaughter of the Swiss Guards at the Tuileries in 1792.

From 1793 to 1815, with only a brief hiatus, Britain was at war with revolutionary France. This was a new kind of war; one fought as much on political and ideological lines as for territorial gain. The armies of the French republic, at first, had little success but after the victory of the largely citizen army at Valmy in 1792 a new force in world politics emerged, a revolutionary army charged with spreading, by force of arms, republican and revolutionary principles throughout Europe. In Britain those sympathising with reformist or radical agendas were declared, at best, as unpatriotic, and, at worst, as traitors. British society became militarised in a way that was unprecedented in earlier conflict. At their peak the armed forces constituted over three-quarters of a million men, about half of whom were locally trained militia. The demand for seamen was especially acute leading the Admiralty to rely more and more upon impressments, with all their unpopularity. Fluctuations in the wartime economy meant that many women were led to rely on their parish for poor relief. Additionally, the recurrent threat of a French invasion was ever present. From October 1797 to May 1798, Napoleon was assembling his 'Army of England' on the other side of the Channel. The nature of the threat changed once Napoleon became First Consul and then, in 1804, Emperor. France was now seen as an aggressive imperial power which it was a national duty to oppose. Patriotic meetings and festivals were frequent, especially in the royal jubilee year of 1809 and at the end of the war in 1814. The threat of invasion receded with Nelson's annihilation of the French fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. With the subsequent French economic blockade of Britain, military activity shifted to supporting the Portuguese and the Spanish in the Peninsular War. After the abdication of Napoleon in 1814, and his subsequent return and defeat at Waterloo, Britain attempted to return to a peacetime society though the dislocation caused by the war would continue and the years that followed the Emperor's fall would be socially troubled and violent.

Post-Waterloo Britain saw a time of economic depression and hardship. Dissatisfaction with the Tory government's handling of the situation was substantial. The 1815 Corn Laws, which protected the price of corn by prohibiting foreign imports until prices reached a certain level, was largely viewed as legislation favouring the landed interest. The campaign against the Corn Laws was well orchestrated by middle- and working-class radicals, utilising petitions, pamphlets and meetings. The phenomenon of the political rally, in which audiences were addressed by a new breed of radical demagogue, such as Henry 'Orator' Hunt, was especially troubling to the government. In 1819 at St Peter's Field, Manchester, the local magistrates attempted to disperse a peaceful gathering of some 60,000 people with troops. The action resulted in 400 dead and the event became notorious as the 'Peterloo massacre'. In 1820 political tensions rose when a band of extreme republicans attempted to assassinate the cabinet and establish a provisional government in its place, in what became known as the 'Cato Street conspiracy'. Lord Liverpool's Tory government responded to this popular unrest with a series of repressive

measures, including the suspension of habeas corpus. The alleviation of the economic situation in the later 1820s somewhat eased political unrest, but the government remained unpopular and pro-reform sentiment increased. In 1828 Wellington's Tory administration was pressured into passing a bill for Catholic emancipation, removing civil restrictions for Catholics (see pp. 218–19). In the wake of severe political agitation, followed by a change in the government from Tory to Whig, a bill for the reform of Parliament was passed in 1832 which allowed the enfranchisement of the middle classes and rationalised the electoral system. Power was still kept in the hands of the property owners, and the working classes were entirely excluded from the franchise. The process of reform, however, had begun and the worst excesses of the old system removed. The Whig government of Earl Grey subsequently initiated a whole series of reforms of national and local government, as well as finally legislating for the abolition of slavery within the British colonies in 1833 (after a six-year period of indenture).

The slave trade and abolitionism

'Abolitionism' generally refers to the political and cultural movement directed against the British Atlantic trade in slaves. This activity was at its height during the period from roughly 1780 to 1807 (when the trade was formally abolished within the British colonies). Between 1680 and 1783 more than two million African slaves were transported to the British colonies alone, and it is estimated that British ships were carrying over 50,000 slaves a year to the Americas between 1791 and 1800 to work in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean and the rice, cotton and tobacco plantations of North America. Most of the slaves went to the sugar colonies, which were believed to account for a substantial portion of Britain's commercial prosperity. The various opponents of the slave trade combined to form the Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. Although the times might have appeared propitious for the speedy abolition of the trade, the campaign was to last a further twenty years. The Committee distributed abolitionist literature; it also encouraged the production of literary writings in opposition to the trade, including poems by Hannah More and William Cowper. The Committee encouraged a grass-roots organisation of those opposed to the trade by creating a network of sympathisers to organise petitions in the provinces. Thomas Clarkson was to develop this provincial abolitionist network when he spent the autumn of 1787 in the hazardous task of collecting reliable first-hand information against the slave trade, interviewing sailors in Bristol and Liverpool. In April 1791 Wilberforce's motion against the trade came to a vote, only to be defeated by 163 to 88. It was not until abolition of the foreign trade in slaves became, for various reasons, part of the national interest that the campaign revived. In June 1806 a general motion for abolition was introduced into the Commons which became law on 25 March 1807. From 1 May 1807 the British slave trade was formally abolished, but this did not, however, mark the end of the global trade in slaves which continued and, in fact, increased in the 1820s.

4.4 First published in 1781. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* was addressed to children, seeking to awaken in them an awareness of God and his works. Hymn VIII assures its readers that God takes care of all his children including the Africans held in

slavery. This Hymn can be compared with Blake's 'Little Black Boy'. The illustration here is taken from an illustrated edition of Barbauld's Hymns from 1880.

Literary overview

Introduction

Literary starting points for the Romantic period are difficult to determine; however, the period is often described as covering the years between the 1780s and the 1830s, although some critics may refer back to the 1760s and others forward to around 1850 as significant dates. Defining the period is difficult because the word 'Romantic' refers to a kind of writing which has been defined in opposition to the literature which came before it. Romanticism is thus antithetical to eighteenth-century neo-classicism, rather than a continuation of already established literary and artistic trends. Some scholars prefer to talk of 'Romantic period' writing, by which they mean the work that is written, published or read in the period 1780–1835 or so, whatever forms its 'Romanticism' takes. Others prefer to discriminate between different kinds of Romanticism, positing, for instance, a 'female Romanticism' which is alternative to the 'male Romanticism' of the canonical poets. One thing that is important to grasp is that the word 'Romantic' itself was not used in the way we use it today by the writers of the time, for whom it meant something pertaining to 'romance'; nor did the writers collected under the heading regard themselves as forming a coherent group. By critical consensus the Romantic poets are the six male poets: William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and Lord Byron. Together, it has been argued, they formed a literary and artistic movement known as 'Romanticism', which marked a profound shift in sensibility. Generally Romanticism was seen as marking a violent reaction against eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought with its emphasis on 'reason' as the predominant human faculty. Romanticism, it is often said, was inspired by the political revolutions of America in 1776 and France in 1789 and that the products of Romanticism tended to be radical or revolutionary. Writers of the Romantic age demonstrate the characteristics listed in the box.

This traditional model has been problematised over the last twenty years or so, chiefly by the emergence of feminist and later new historicist criticism, which has changed the field of study as we know it. Women, self-taught and working-class poets are currently still in the process of being recovered. No longer is there a concentration on the work of six male poets (who may or may not have had that much in common); instead a huge variety of writing, most of which does not fit the standard definition of Romanticism is now studied. New historicist critics have expressed great suspicion over the whole concept of Romanticism, arguing that, in its espousal of transcendence and mysticism (chiefly in the later writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge), it deliberately evades or ignores material reality and social concerns in what is a manifestly political strategy.

Romanticism as an aesthetic category
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Romantic poets affirm the creative powers of the imagination.

- Romantic poets introduce us to a new way of looking at nature, which becomes the main subject of their work. The Romantics often argue that the possibility of transcendence or 'unity of being' can be achieved through communion with nature. Their work exhibits a preference for nature in its sublime aspects: mountains, glaciers, chasms, storms, as well as strange and exotic settings.
- Romantic poets tend to explain human society and its development in terms of an organic model, or a model borrowed from nature, and they reject materialist and mechanistic philosophies.
- Romantic poets write about the nature of the individual self and the value of individual experience.
- Romantic thought shows a high regard for the figure of the artist, who is variously described as sage, philosopher, prophet and religious saviour.

Continuities, innovations and influences

Traditionally Romanticism was seen to begin around the time of the Revolution in France and to develop certain stylistic and linguistic innovations. These innovations are reflected in the works of a number of writers. William Blake produced his prophetic and apocalyptic illuminated books during the 1790s. Blake's personal vision, expressed in a highly symbolic language and form, was seen by many to inaugurate a new kind of revolutionary writing. Similarly, the publication in 1798 of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, which contained, in addition to Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', a series of experimental ballads and lyric poems treating rustic subjects and their distress in an elevated and tragic manner, can be seen as a rejection of eighteenth-century poetics. Wordsworth's later apologia for his poems, the 'Preface of 1800', defended the serious treatment of such subjects and could be seen as a manifesto for a revolutionary kind of poetry, for a revolutionary age. Wordsworth also claimed that the *Ballads* ushered in a stylistic revolution in poetry, banishing the allegedly stilted diction of earlier neo-classical poets, preferring instead a language closer to that of contemporary usage. Similarly, notions of genre and hierarchy were transformed by the Romantics. There are, however, other works published in the 1780s and 1790s which might make the claim for the revolutionary nature of Blakean and Wordsworthian Romanticism seem less convincing. In 1785 William Cowper's long blank-verse poem, *The Task*, also dealt with simple homely subjects, its descriptions of the sights and sounds of country life foreshadowing those of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Robert Merry and the group of poets that gathered round him (including Mary Robinson and Hannah Cowley) were known as the Della Crusicans; they produced a series of rhetorically ornate and emotional poems of sensibility published in *The Florence Miscellany* (1785) and the *British Album* (1790), which may well have influenced the young Romantics. Wordsworth's and Coleridge's concern with low and rustic life, and their stress on emotion, had been pre-empted by Robert Burns, whose *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* of 1786 demonstrates a similar interest in humble, rural life and poetic language. Similarly, Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* of 1784 and William Lisle Bowles's sentimental *Fourteen Sonnets* of 1789 manifested an intensely emotional response to the natural world, which one might think of as Romantic. Our contemporary critics have tended to

place less emphasis on the revolutionary aspects of 'Romantic' literature and more stress on its continuities with the thought, literature and art of preceding decades. One such important trend was the vogue for sensibility.

Sensibility was an eighteenth-century movement that stressed the importance of the emotions and feelings in human relationships. From around the 1740s onwards a number of thinkers argued that humans possessed an innate moral sense or sensibility which manifested itself through the emotions in feelings of sympathy and benevolence for others. This movement has been linked to the rise of the middle classes in the eighteenth century and their growing concern with the reformation of manners. The origins of sensibility are complex. It was a movement which combined an empiricist notion of human knowledge derived from philosophers such as John Locke with the belief, expressed by the radical Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, that humanity in a state of nature is naturally good and benevolent, but is corrupted by society and civilisation. Rousseau stressed the importance of the natural and the power of feeling. Very early on sensibility was gendered as a female property, as, it was claimed, women were possessed of a more delicate constitution and therefore were more susceptible to emotion. The Methodist theology of John Wesley and his adherents also contributed to the movement by stressing the primacy of feeling in religious experience, the importance of a heavily emotional and excessive language of sin and rebirth, and the need for a personal encounter with Christ the redeemer. The fictions of Samuel Richardson and Laurence Sterne exploited sensibility and employed male characters who wept copiously over the plights of distressed women, captive slaves and prisoners, and hurt and dying animals. Sensibility also confused gender roles for many, as some men cultivated feeling and sensitivity as in Henry Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771)

By the 1790s sensibility had become politicised by its association with radical and reformist politics, as demonstrated by James Gillray's satire 'The New Morality', in which British reformers and radicals (including Paine, Fox and Coleridge and Southey) worship at the shrine of the new trinity, Philanthropy, Sensibility and Benevolence, established by Enlightenment and revolutionary ideology. Sensibility was thus identified with a potentially dangerous mode of life. Too much sensibility might lead to hysteria and disorder; it might lead to the over-cultivation of the senses at the expense of the reason and judgment; it might lead to men behaving like women; and, most pernicious of all, following one's feeling might lead to sexual impropriety and ruin.

4.5 Gillray's print, published in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* (1798), satirises contemporary radical intellectuals. Sensibility is one of a trinity of idols, along with Justice and Philanthropy, worshipped by writers and politicians including S. T. Coleridge, Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, Erasmus Darwin, Joseph Priestley, John Thelwall and Gilbert Wakefield. The Goddess Sensibility weeps over a dead bird, holds a book by Rousseau and has her right foot on the severed head of Louis XVI.

The Gothic
Like 'Romantic', 'Gothic' is a word that can mean many different things. By the late eighteenth century the term had come to symbolise the 'medieval' or the 'Dark

Ages' prior to the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution, denoting that which was barbaric, disordered, irregular. In the mid-eighteenth century there appeared a number of works idealising medieval culture and architecture in opposition to neo-classical form and design. The irregularity of the medieval cathedral or garden came to be prized above neo-classical Palladian architecture, and the ruin, whether real or faked, became a source of aesthetic delight. Edmund Burke's *Enquiry concerning the Origin of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) provided a justification for its aesthetics by arguing that terror was an expression of the sublime. The melancholy and, often, morbid poetry of the eighteenth-century 'Graveyard School' similarly created a climate and readership for Gothic subjects. Though it began as an antiquarian and architectural trend, the Gothic became associated with the novel form with the publication in 1764 of Horace Walpole's medieval romance, set in eleventh-century Spain, *The Castle of Otranto*. *Otranto*, with its southern Mediterranean setting, its aristocratic and patriarchal villain Manfred, its persecuted heroine Isabella, its Castle, garrulous servants and supernatural events, set the pattern for future novels. Walpole's followers included Clara Reeve, William Beckford, Matthew Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, William Godwin, Charlotte Dacre, Mary Shelley and Charles Maturin. Many subsequently abandoned Walpole's medieval settings; some, like Radcliffe, avoided the explicitly supernatural, preferring suggestion to outright horror. The Gothic was not confined only to the novel form but encompassed drama and poetry as well.

4.6 One of the most influential paintings of the Romantic period, Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* caused a sensation on its first showing at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1782. Fuseli's powerfully disturbing canvas explores such Gothic themes as the supernatural, sexual repression, dreaming and the use of narcotics.

The growing interest and approbation of the primitive and the wild played a large part in Romantic-period writing and can be located in the Gothic concern with the past. In the mid-eighteenth century Thomas Warton, Richard Hurd and others began to argue, against the norms of eighteenth-century neo-classicism, that the art and culture of the medieval and ancient past was authentic and closer to human nature, certainly more relevant than the stultifying decorums of social life. Thomas Gray had a strong interest in Welsh bardic poetry, James Macpherson composed a series of poems which he claimed were translations of the imaginary Gaelic poet 'Ossian', and Thomas Chatterton claimed to have discovered the medieval manuscripts of the fifteenth-century poet Thomas Rowley, which he published between 1768–69. Bishop Thomas Percy collected and published in 1765 his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, which was to be hugely influential on later Romantic writers. In the 1740s a group of poets known as the 'Graveyard School' published several impressive works, including Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–5), Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743) and Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1751). Such works reflected on death and the frailties of human life in a sombre and, often morbid, tone. The neo-classical emphasis on reason is increasingly replaced by feeling and the sublime.

Modes of production and consumption: the literary marketplace and the periodical review

The period 1780–1830 presents a transitional phase in the literary marketplace as the commercial publishing practices of the earlier century give way to the fully industrialised and technology-driven production process of the Victorian period. Certainly the publication of titles increased throughout the century. In the 1820s there were several thousand registered printing presses. James Raven estimates that annual publication totals for all titles increased from

c. 1,900 in 1740, to c. 3,000 in 1780, to over 6,000 by 1800 (Raven, *Judging New Wealth* [Cx]). William St Clair estimates that book annual publications in England were c. 500 from 1700–50, rising to 600 during 1750–89, to 800 from 1790 to 1810 and around 1,000 by 1827 (St Clair, *Reading Nation* [Cx]). St Clair states that, from the 1780s to the 1830s, records exist for some 5,000 new books of poetic verse written by something like 2,000 living poets in addition to the reprinting of older canonical writing. The number of new novels printed was similarly large with 3,000 new titles recorded as published between 1790 and 1830. Newspapers and periodicals similarly grew in numbers increasing from something like 9,464,790 copies in 1760 to 29,387,843 copies in 1820. The processes of book production were gradually mechanised with the introduction of Earl Stanhope's iron platen press, which superseded the traditional printing method of the wooden hand press. Subsequently the steam-driven cylinder press was introduced in the second decade of the nineteenth century. The process of lithography was invented in 1798. This is a mechanical process in which the printing and non-printing areas of the plate are all at the same level, as opposed to intaglio and relief processes in which the design is cut into the printing block. Lithography allowed the printing of pictures in colour.

4.7 A typical printing press of the early nineteenth century, similar to one William Blake may have used for his engravings.

Many of these innovations were to be perfected later in the century and the printing business remained very much a craft rather than an industry, using specialised artisans, such as the engraver William Blake. Newspapers such as *The Morning Chronicle* (1769), *The Morning Post* (1772), and *The Times* (1788) appeared for the first time.

During the period publishing became an increasingly specialised trade whereby production, wholesaling and retailing came to be handled by separate firms. Roles in the larger firms became more specialised with the emergence of 'readers' and 'literary agents' (notably John Ballantyne, Scott's agent). The size of the reading public itself has been variously estimated as 80,000, by Edmund Burke in 1790, and 'probably not less than 200,000' by the *Edinburgh Review* in 1814 (St Clair, *Reading Nation* [Cx], pp. 478–79). The consensus is that figures of around 65 per cent for male literacy and 50 per cent for female literacy were achieved. Such levels were much higher in Scotland (probably 90 per cent male literacy) due to its national and compulsory elementary educational system. Certainly the Methodist and dissenting stress on the culture of the word meant that there was a strong imperative to literacy as did the growth in leisure culture, especially among middle-class women. The importance of the commercial circulating libraries was crucial. These increased dramatically in the latter half of the eighteenth

century and it has been estimated that there were probably some 1,000 such libraries in Great Britain by 1801 and 1,500 by 1821. It was often claimed, perhaps not reliably, that the libraries' main customers were females whose chief interest was sensational fiction. Some of the larger libraries rented texts other than novels, but for many the latest fiction was the commodity in which they specialised, increasingly in the three-volume duodecimo format. After 1814 the major items lent by the libraries were Scott's Waverley novels, confirming his pre-eminence as the most popular novelist in the period.

Pirated editions were common on the domestic market and significantly influenced the cultural landscape. Pirates, such as William Benbow, claimed, with much justice, that publishers had established a monopoly to restrict the spread of knowledge from the lower classes by inflating the price of books. Famously, William Godwin's radical treatise *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* of 1793 was not prosecuted for sedition because Pitt believed that its high price of 3 guineas would keep it out of the hands of the impressionable and discontented. Taxes such as the stamp duty on pamphlets and newspapers, as well as the 3 shillings tax on books below a certain size, were an attempt to control and restrict the flow of information and knowledge. The taxes were ruthlessly enforced on those selling unstamped publications. The Seditious Societies Act of 1799 was designed to prevent the circulation of inexpensive political tracts among the lower orders.

A crucial element of the literary scene was the literary journal, which included essays, reviews, poetry, parliamentary reports and so on. The most important in the eighteenth century was the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731–1818). Two newer journals important for the Romantic period were the *Monthly Review* (1749–1845) and the *Critical Review* (1756–90), the former appealing to a liberal Whig readership and the latter to a conservative Tory readership. With the explosion in reading and debate occasioned by the revolutionary decade of the 1790s, the periodical came to be more partisan and appealed to a distinct reading community, cultivated by promoting certain key values and ideas. New journals catering for the Dissenting, Reformist and radical cause emerged, including the *Monthly Magazine* (1796–1843), the *Analytical Review* (1788–98) and the *English Review* (1783–96). Such journals were countered by pro-government vehicles such as the *British Critic* (1793–1843) and *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner* (1797–8), a satirical review produced by William Gifford and George Canning. During the conservative backlash of the post-revolutionary period many radical journals suffered, but John and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* (1808–81) maintained production despite Leigh Hunt's imprisonment for seditious libel against the Regent. After the conclusion of the Napoleonic War other political journals emerged. Most famous was William Cobbett's weekly *Political Register*, priced at twopence (his 'tuppenny trash'), but other radical weeklies included T. J. Wooler's *Black Dwarf* (1817–24), John Wade's *Gorgon* (1818–19) and Richard Carlile's *Republican* (1819–26). Such journals indicated the growing level of 'class' consciousness that began to emerge as the process of the Industrial Revolution gathered pace.

The *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*

The most significant innovation in the history of the periodical press in the period was the arrival of the two leading literary reviews of the nineteenth century, the quarterly

Edinburgh Review (1802–1929) and the *Quarterly Review* (1809–1967). These were followed by the Tory *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1817–1980) and the utilitarian *Westminster Review* (1824). Rather than reviewing large numbers of works, the editors of the two journals would review around fifteen books in depth per quarter emphasising the reviewer's literary accomplishment, sometimes at the expense of the author reviewed. The *Edinburgh* was sympathetic to the Whig, professional and liberal intellectual audience; its editor, Francis Jeffrey, was a liberal secular progressive. Infused with the values of the Scottish Enlightenment, the journal regarded the French Revolution as a necessary, though calamitous, event in the freeing of the commercial and professional classes of the nation, promoting the notion of a commercialised civil society. The *Quarterly*, set up to counter the influence of the elder journal, was sympathetic to the conservative and Tory cause, regarding itself as the 'literary police'. It was supportive of the 'Lake School' of Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge, and vituperative about both the 'Cockney School' of Leigh Hunt, among which it included Hunt's protégé John Keats, and the 'Satanic School' of Byron and Shelley, as well as about the essayist William Hazlitt. John Wilson's *Blackwood's* proved to be an important journal for the development of the Romantic prose essay (notably De Quincey) as well as for its translation of German Romantic and idealist philosophy. The *London Magazine* printed some of the best prose of Hazlitt, De Quincey and Lamb. In the early years the quarterlies had a circulation of 3–4,000 yet by 1817 this has jumped to around 12–14,000. Following on the success of the middle-class quarterlies, a new generation of cheap, mass-produced journals for the working classes began to emerge in the 1820s, with titles such as *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* (1822–49), which would reach circulations of up to 250,000.

Essay and journal writing was a prominent feature of the literary marketplace. Coleridge wrote a great deal for newspapers such as the *Morning Chronicle* and *Post* as well as for journals and reviews. He also published, for a time and not too successfully, his own journals, *The Watchman* of 1796 and *The Friend* (1811–12). The chief prose essayist of the period wrote primarily for the reviews. William Hazlitt published in a wide range of periodicals, including the *Political Register*, *The Times*, the *Edinburgh Review* and the *London Magazine*. He preferred the form of the familiar essay, his pieces collected in *Table Talk* (1821–2) and *The Plain Speaker* (1826). Hazlitt showed himself as a powerful and influential literary critic in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) and his *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818). His most influential work was his series of essays on the key writers and thinkers of the period, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825). Thomas De Quincey, probably the most accomplished prose stylist of the period, was variously a journalist, essayist, novelist and autobiographer. His essays largely appeared in *Tait's* and *Blackwood's* magazines and covered an enormous range of subjects from political economy, history and diplomacy to literary criticism. Notable pieces include his essay 'On the Knocking on the Gate in Macbeth' (1823), 'On Murder as One of the Fine Arts' (1827) and 'The English Mail-Coach' (1849). His writings on Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey were collected as *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* (1834–9). Charles Lamb produced his humorous and ironic *Essays of Elia* in 1833. He also wrote several works for children including (with his sister Mary) *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807). Leigh Hunt was also a master of the familiar essay. In numerous pieces for the

journals the *Examiner* and the *Indicator* (which he edited with his brother John) he commented on the political and cultural scene of Regency Britain.

4.8 Founded in 1809 to combat the liberalism of its rival *The Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review* quickly established itself as one of the two most important nineteenth-century reviews. The *Review* became notorious for its vituperative attacks on the poetry of John Keats and the 'Cockney School'. The May number for 1809 carried a review of Thomas Campbell's poem *Gertrude of Wyoming*.

Authors, texts and subjects

The first generation of Romantic poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge

It was against the background of the French Revolution and the debate it initiated that much of the writing of the first generation of Romantic poets appeared. Blake's illuminated *Songs of Innocence* was printed in 1789. Blake developed a technique of engraving and printing his own designs to accompany his poetry. His *The French Revolution* of 1791 transformed the political events in France into a visionary apocalypse. His *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was produced in 1794. Blake's concern with the dialectic of two stages of life, innocence and experience, through which the individual must pass, has come to be regarded as a deeply Romantic notion. The *Songs* contain many of Blake's most famous lyrics, 'London', 'The Tyger', 'The Chimney Sweeper' poems, 'The Fly', 'The Lamb' and 'Holy Thursday'. Blake continued to develop his personal radical philosophy which countered the present establishment in a series of prophecies during the 1790s, such as *Europe* and *America*, championing the idea of a spirit of revolutionary energy (sometimes represented in the figure Orc) battling against the zealous controller of Energy and Thought in the material world, Urizen. Blake's energies after 1800 would be taken up with his major epics, *The Four Zoas*, *Milton* (1804) and *Jerusalem*.

The late 1790s saw the emergence of other leading poets of the first generation of Romantic writers. In 1798 the influential collection of *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* was published anonymously. The volume contains much quintessential Romantic poetry, including the first version of Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', Wordsworth's great Romantic lyric 'Tintern Abbey', and ballads such as 'The Thorn', 'The Idiot Boy' and 'Simon Lee'. The collection was reissued in two volumes in 1800 under Wordsworth's name, with some additional poems and the famous 'Preface' defending the poets' use of the 'language really used by men' and the rustic nature of their subjects (*Norton Anthology*, ed. Greenblatt et al., p. 264 [A]). Wordsworth's attack on eighteenth-century poetic diction, with its ornateness and artificiality, marked out both his and Coleridge's poetry from that of some of their contemporaries. During 1797–8, the *annus mirabilis* of their relationship, Coleridge and Wordsworth composed much of their most celebrated poetry, including the 'Ancient Mariner', Coleridge's 'Conversation Poems', 'Kubla Khan', and the first part of the uncompleted *Christabel*. In 1799 Wordsworth also began the process of composing the long poem that would become *The Prelude* after his death and which would come to be regarded by many as the quintessential Romantic poem. In that year he completed what is known as the 'Two-Part

Prelude'; two books of blank verse describing his early childhood in the northern Lake District and the visionary intensity of his relationship with nature. This poem would be continually revised throughout his life, expanding to thirteen books in 1805 and fourteen by the time of his death.

With the French invasion of Switzerland in 1798 and the subsequent rise of Napoleon, sectors of radical and dissenting opinion moved away from opposing the war against France. Coleridge, Wordsworth and their friend and fellow poet, Robert Southey, all drifted in different ways to a position of conservatism. Southey was probably the most strident in his opinions especially after his association with the Tory *Quarterly Review* from about 1810 onwards. Southey's literary output, of both poetry and prose, was phenomenal. In particular he was known for his contribution to the eighteenth-century vogue for Oriental romance. His Arabian verse epic, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) set a fashion for such verse tales which would be exploited by Scott and Moore. Southey's scholarly and imaginative interest in comparative religion fuelled his interest in Thalaba's Islamic context and his *Madoc* (1805) and *The Curse of Kehema* (1810) similarly explored Aztec, Celtic and Hindu mythology. Certainly Southey's innovations in Orientalism and the verse narrative, exploited more successfully by others, were crucial to the literature of the period.

4.9 Blake's 'The Tyger' from his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* of 1794 has become one of the most famous of Romantic poems and images. Blake illuminated his poems with visual illustration achieved by a process of etching the design in wax-covered plates before applying acid to eat into the plate's surface leaving the illustration to be printed.

Two poets less closely associated by later critics with the aesthetic of Romanticism, Sir Walter Scott and George Crabbe, also published in this period. Although now known chiefly as a novelist (see below), Scott began his literary career first as a translator of German ballads, then as a collector of the chivalric ballads of the Border region which he published in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–3), a three-volume annotated collection. His first original work, the romance, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which focused on the Border's historical past, appeared in 1805 to be followed by further ballad epics concerning the historical and political rivalry between High and Lowland Scotland. Other less popular romances followed and Scott realised that he could not match the new verse romances of Byron, just then appearing, in terms of popularity. He decided to turn his attention to the novel, with spectacularly successful results. George Crabbe had attacked the idealisations of rural life in his *The Village* of 1783; his subsequent poetry, beginning with *Poems* (1807), was more successful and significantly more prolific. Crabbe preferred a poetic style closer to Alexander Pope, employing the form of the heroic couplet in a series of works, 'The Parish Register' (published in his *Poems*) and *The Borough* (1810), which describes life in an imaginary seaport closely based on a number of Suffolk towns he knew well. His poetry was both popular and fully engaged with contemporary social and cultural issues.

The Lake School
Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey were grouped together as the 'Lake School of

Poets' by Francis Jeffrey in a review of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* for the 1817 *Edinburgh Review*. This notion of a group of poets who, at one time or another, all lived in the Lake District of north-west England and formed, in some way, a coherent school of poetry had gained currency since about 1807. The group were attacked by liberal and radical poets, essayists and reviewers such as Jeffrey, Hazlitt and, most famously, Byron in the 'Preface' to Canto I of *Don Juan*. It was felt that they had turned their backs on their radical youth and had abandoned progressive politics, preferring, instead, to advocate a quasi-mystical relationship with nature instead of an active engagement with politics. Wordsworth had moved to the North of England and settled in Grasmere in 1799, and he was followed there by Southey and Coleridge. From this period Coleridge gained an insight into Kantian and German idealist philosophy which converted him from empiricism to a form of idealism in which the human mind is itself active in the creation of knowledge. He attempted to explain his ideas in a series of later publications including the periodical *The Friend* (1812) and *The Lay Sermons* (1816–17). Wordsworth composed many of his greatest lyrical poems at Grasmere, including 'The Brothers', 'Michael', 'Resolution and Independence' and the 'Ode (Intimations of Immortality)'. He developed here a pantheistic philosophy of nature which functioned as a compensation for the failure of the revolutionary cause as he saw it. From 1813 he served the government in the lucrative sinecure of Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland. He published his long philosophical poem, *The Excursion* (1814) which presented a conservative philosophy and his two-volume *Poems* in 1815.

The second generation of Romantic poets: Byron, Shelley, Keats

The younger generation of Romantic poets born after the French Revolution, while maintaining many 'Romantic' beliefs such as the importance of passion, the celebration of sublime nature, and spontaneity in poetry, reacted against the elder poets in a number of ways. This generation were associated with liberal or radical ideas in opposition to the alleged 'apostasy' of their predecessors. In the 'Dedication' to *Don Juan*, Byron excoriated the 'Lake School' as a group of turncoats:

Bob Southey! You're a poet – Poet Laureate,
And representative of all the race;
Although 'tis true you turned out a Tory at
Last. Yours has lately been a common case;
And now, my epic renegade, what are ye at,
With all the Lakers in and out of place?
A nest of tuneful persons to my eye
Like 'four and twenty blackbirds in a pie'.

(Wu, *Romanticism*, p. 933 [A])

Byron further developed the persona of the alienated ‘Byronic hero’ in a series of highly popular Eastern Tales, the most famous of which are *The Giaour* (1813) and *The Corsair* (1814), and the poetic drama *Manfred* (1816), which hinted at

Byron’s incestuous love of his half-sister Augusta, as well as Cantos III (1817) and IV (1818) of *Childe Harold*. Byron subsequently abandoned the romantic persona of his earlier works in a series of extremely accomplished and often biting satires, *Beppo* (1818), *The Vision of Judgement* (1822) and the gentler narrative romance, *The Island* (1832), based on the story of the *Bounty* mutiny. His greatest work, however, was his unfinished masterpiece *Don Juan*, the first two Cantos of which appeared in 1819 followed by Cantos III–V (1821), Cantos VI–XIV (1823), and Cantos XV–XVI (1824). The poem tells the story of the adventures of the young Spanish nobleman Don Juan, involving shipwreck, cannibalism, the carnage of the Siege of Ismail, the court of Catherine the Great and follies and fashions of Regency society.

Byron and Byronism

The most popular poet of the Romantic age was George Gordon, Lord Byron. His romances were extremely successful in commercial terms and his comic epic masterpiece *Don Juan* (thanks in part to cheap pirated editions) was read by numbers in excess of anything with the exception of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*. His celebrity and notoriety encapsulated in the personality cult of Byronism, which swept Europe before and after his death, made him one of the century’s most significant writers. It was his verse romance *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, the first two cantos of which appeared in 1812, which made him famous and secured his massive readership. The cynical, alienated and solitary Harold wandering around Europe and the Levant, musing moodily on the wastes of time and the vanity of human aspirations was irresistibly attractive to his post-revolutionary generation. Byron became the centre of fashionable Regency society until the scandalous separation from his wife in 1816 necessitated his self-imposed exile in Italy and then Greece. The myth of the Byronic hero was established for the next generation by the poet’s death at Missolonghi in 1824 while engaged in the struggle for Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Robert Southey, in the *Quarterly Review*, had identified Byron and Percy Shelley as constituting the ‘Satanic School’ of poetry. Byron and Shelley were very different kinds of poet but they shared an Enlightenment scepticism and a liberal (in Shelley’s case radical) oppositional stance to the Tory government of their day, as well as a strong predilection for movements for national independence, notably in Greece. Shelley, however, was always more of an optimist about humanity’s capacity for improvement than the more pessimistic Byron and this shows in the visionary nature of much of his writing. Shelley was something of a scandalous figure for Regency England; he was famously expelled from Oxford as a consequence of his pamphlet (written with his friend T. J. Hogg), *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811) and his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, committed suicide after he sensationally eloped with Mary Godwin. His first major publication was his radical philosophical poem *Queen Mab* (1813) with its extensive footnotes from Enlightenment thinkers. The pirated publishing of the poem assured its lasting success and influence. Increasingly associated with Byron (whom he met in

Switzerland in 1816) and the liberal circle of writers associated with Leigh Hunt and his journal *The Examiner*, Shelley returned to England in 1816 and supported the revival of the reform movement. His bitter and satirical *The Masque of Anarchy* was written in anguished protest at the 'Peterloo Massacre' in 1819. Shelley was also one of the greatest lyric poets of the age, producing some of the most accomplished Romantic shorter poems, including 'To a Skylark', 'The Sensitive Plant' and, most famous of all, the 'Ode to the West Wind'. In 1821 he wrote his elegy on Keats's death, *Adonais*, claiming that the poet had been killed off by a cruel review of *Endymion* (1817) in the *Quarterly*. Shelley was drowned a month before his thirtieth birthday in a boating accident in the Bay of Lerici off the coast of Italy. The burning of his body on a funeral pyre by Byron, Leigh Hunt and others remains one of the iconic moments of the Romantic age. Shelley left one important work, 'The Triumph of Life', unfinished.

4.10 Frontispiece to *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London, 1859). This nineteenth-century engraving of Byron, after the portrait by Thomas Phillips, shows the poet wearing Ottoman dress in suitably Byronic manner. The original portrait was painted at the height of the fashion for 'Byronism' and identifies the poet with the hero-villains of his popular Oriental Tales. See the discussion of his *The Giaour* in the Readings section.

Unlike Byron and Shelley, who were both aristocrats, John Keats was from a humble, though not a poor background; his father managed a prosperous livery stable. He was educated at the Clarke School in Enfield and set to take up the profession of surgeon and licensed apothecary, which he gave up for poetry. His first volume of *Poems* was published in 1817. Keats made the acquaintance of the poet and journalist Leigh Hunt and his circle of friends, including the artist B. R. Haydon and fellow poet John Hamilton Reynolds. Keats's work was championed by Leigh Hunt in the pages of the *Examiner* and from this association Keats became one of the members of what the Tory *Quarterly* and others described as the 'Cockney School' of poets, a pejorative term suggesting a middle-class, suburban and metropolitan kind of writing. His first major work was the long, poetic romance *Endymion* (1817) which tells the story of the shepherd with whom the moon goddess Cynthia falls in love (among other myths and legends). The poem was written in loose, flowing heroic couplets and in a sensuous style. It was vilified by the conservative reviewers of the *Quarterly*, *Blackwood's* and the *British Critic*. In 1819, known as Keats's *annus mirabilis*, he produced much of the poetry that he is best-known for. He began work on his projected Miltonic epic *Hyperion* which recounts the story of the battle between the failing Titans and the rising Olympian gods which he would abandon to rework as the visionary poem *The Fall of Hyperion* later in the year. In February he completed the medieval romance, *The Eve of St Agnes*, with its complex and ambiguous tale of star-crossed love written in Spenserian stanzas, as well as the ballad-like poem 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. In the spring of 1819 Keats wrote what many consider as his greatest works, and ones which have become synonymous with Romanticism: the Odes 'To Psyche', 'To a Nightingale', 'On a Grecian Urn', and his last extended narrative, *Lamia* (revised in 1820). He famously died of consumption at the age of twenty-five.

Women Romantic poets

Women wrote and published huge amounts of poetry in the Romantic period. Much of their writing was extremely popular and influential. Because their work does not so easily fit into the aesthetic of 'Romanticism', as it has been traditionally defined, and also because their periods of activity do not dovetail so neatly with the traditional periodisation of Romanticism, it is helpful to discuss their work under the separate heading; however, it is important to understand that women writers were publishing at the same time as their male counterparts, and often in creative dialogue with them, and that any sense of grouping of male and female writers has to remain hesitant.

Anna Laetitia Barbauld was a prominent dissenter, the daughter of John Aikin, a schoolmaster at the Warrington Academy. In 1773 she published her *Poems* and her *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* to great acclaim. Establishing herself as a teacher, she published *Lessons for Children* (1778) and *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781). From the late 1780s she wrote pamphlets on political subjects such as the slave trade and the war with France, as well as an important verse 'Epistle to William Wilberforce' (1791). Her last published poem, the powerful satire, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812) presented an apocalyptic view of the consequences of the current war. The poem was unpleasantly criticised as unpatriotic and Barbauld never published poetry again. Mary Robinson was an actress, courtesan, poet, novelist and memoirist. Known as 'Perdita' after her performance in David Garrick's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, she became the mistress of the Prince of Wales. Her first volume of poems was published in 1775 and her two-volume *Poems* in 1791–3. Her sonnet sequence *Sappho and Phaon* appeared in 1796, the same year as Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects*. The fine late ballad 'The Haunted Beach' from her *Lyrical Tales* (1800) is a response to 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and her 'Poem to Coleridge' to his 'Kubla Khan'. A major novelist of the period as well as a poet, Charlotte Smith's important collection of poems of sensibility, the *Elegiac Sonnets*, was first published in 1784. Her affective perception of nature and her strong sensibility influenced Coleridge, Keats and Wordsworth. The *Sonnets* combined a powerful poetry of sensibility with a strong Gothic tone, as well as a fine feeling for the natural world. The collection was an immediate success but, faced with expensive legal battles concerning her father's will and the separation from her husband, Smith turned increasingly to the novel to provide literary earnings to support her family. At the time of her death she was completing the collection *Beachy Head with other Poems* (1807), the title poem being an evocation of her childhood which has been compared with Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. Anna Seward, or 'the Swan of Lichfield', was a largely self-educated poet and letter-writer, known for the ornateness and sentimentality of her verse. Seward disliked Smith's experimentation with the sonnet, preferring the form of the 'epic elegy' which her friend Erasmus Darwin credited her with inventing, including her *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780) and her *Monody on the Death of Major Andre* (1781). Seward, unlike many woman writers of the time, was aggressively competitive and a noted public critic of Samuel Johnson.

Helen Maria Williams was a poet and novelist who published a number of poems of sensibility in the 1780s. Writing from Paris, she became, from the 1790s onwards, a key political commentator on the Revolution in France. The most popular poet of the period

from 1820–35, after Byron, was Felicia Dorothea Hemans. Known, in particular, for her depiction of domestic subjects and manners, Hemans wrote to help with her household expenses. She published her first volume of poetry at the age of fourteen, wisely rejecting the subsequent offer of correspondence with an admiring Shelley. Hemans published prolifically, notable among her many works are her *Tales and Historic Scenes* (1819), ‘Songs of the Cid’ (1822), the tragedy, *The Siege of Valencia* (1823), and *Records of Woman* (1830). Numerous of her lyrics, including ‘Casabianca’, ‘The Homes of England’ and ‘The Graves of a Household’, were memorised by schoolchildren, and her focus on domesticity ensured her substantial popularity with a later Victorian audience and the reprinting and anthologising of her work. Almost as popular and prolific as Hemans was Laetitia Elizabeth Landon (known as ‘L. E. L.’). She published a number of novels and volumes of poetry; the most significant are *The Fate of Adelaide* (1821), *The Improvisatrice* (1824), *The Troubadour* (1825), *The Golden Violet* (1827) and *The Venetian Bracelet* (1829), in which she often assumed the persona of the innocent but rejected lover. Other notable works by female poets of the period include Mary Blanchford Tighe’s *Psyche; or, The Legend of Love* (1805), an allegorical retelling of the story of *Cupid and Psyche* which may have influenced Keats; Mary Russell Mitford’s romance based on the *Bounty* story, *Christina, or the Maid of the South Seas*, and her series of sketches of rural life, *Our Village*, published between 1824 and 1832; Eleanor Porden’s scientific romance, *The Veils: or Triumph of Constancy* (1815); and Ann and Jane Taylor’s numerous collections of verse for children including *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804) which contains Jane’s poem ‘The Star’, or ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’ as it is more commonly known.

Labouring poets

Romantic poets often wrote about rural nature, but also popular in their day, though since excluded from the canon of ‘high’ Romanticism, were poets actually identified as ‘peasant’ or labouring. This category of writer was a fixture of the literary culture of the day and functioned as an acceptable, though heavily circumscribed, opportunity for working people to be published and address a wider public. Patrons desirous of unearthing authentic and unschooled creative genius were ever on the look-out for promising candidates. Robert Burns was packaged as a poetical ploughman absorbed on the poetical minutiae of his local rural world in the 1786 Kilmarnock edition of his *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, though he was clearly a highly sophisticated and intellectual writer. Burns published two further volumes of poetry in 1787 and 1793. James Hogg, known as the ‘Ettrick shepherd’, was also a rural labouring-class poet who worked as shepherd until his mid-thirties. Hogg, known mainly for his powerful Gothic fiction *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), published substantial amounts of poetry for *Blackwood’s*. His *Poetic Mirror* (1816) also revealed him as a gifted parodist of mainstream Romantic poetry. John Clare was similarly represented as the ‘Northamptonshire Peasant Poet’ and marketed as such by his publisher John Taylor in a series of collections, including *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820), *The Village Minstrel* (1821), *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (1827) and the *Rural Muse* (1835). Clare, like Burns, was a major poet who found the limitations imposed upon him as a ‘peasant poet’ crippling. Robert Bloomfield, known as the ‘Farmer’s Boy’ (actually by then a shoemaker) produced rural poetry; his first volume of poems sold 40,000 copies.

Ann Yearsley, known as ‘Lactilla’ or ‘the Bristol Milkwoman’, was championed by Hannah More as an example of a working poet. Her *Poems on Several Occasions* was published in 1785 and further collections followed, despite her public and bitter rupture with More. Other poets, such as Samuel Bamford, the ‘weaver’s boy’ and Ebenezer Elliot (1781–1849), the ‘corn law rhymers’, produced explicitly social and political verse.

The Romantic novel

The Romantic period was one in which the novel assumed a new seriousness. The eighteenth-century debate concerning realism and romance in fiction continued. The Gothic romance established by Walpole remained extremely popular. Generally the Gothic novel has been identified as a British, Protestant, middle-class form which located its ‘others’ among tyrannical and gloomy Catholic aristocrats and violent, unruly plebeians. Its obsessions were very much bourgeois ones, dealing with superstition, tyranny and violence. From its inception incest and disordered family relations were among its dominant themes. Although Ann Radcliffe’s novels were admired, there were other popular fictions and dramas which were viewed with suspicion by polite society, including novels by Eliza Parsons, Regina Maria Roche, supernatural tales like those published by Matthew Lewis as *Tales of Wonder* (1801), and Gothic dramas, such as Lewis’s *The Castle Spectre* (1798). Certainly by the early decades of the nineteenth century there was a conservative backlash against the ‘low’ fiction of Gothic. One thing that troubled polite reviewers was the sheer popularity of the form.

Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (published in 1777 as *The Champion of Virtue*) minimised Walpole’s supernaturalism and emphasised historical realism, beginning a genre of writing which critics from Ellen Moers onwards have referred to as ‘female Gothic’ (*Literary Women*, p. 9 [Cix]). Sophia Lee’s historical romance, *The Recess* (1785), had strong Gothic overtones with its depiction of the persecutions visited on two forgotten daughters of Mary Queen of Scots, as did Charlotte Smith’s *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788) and *The Old Manor House* (1793) which pre-empted Radcliffe’s concern with the explained supernatural. William Beckford’s *Vathek* (1786), though more properly regarded as an Oriental tale, located its terrors in the time of the *Arabian Nights* with its despotic Caliph Vathek and his quest for the treasures of the pre-Adamite Sultans. Radcliffe was the period’s most accomplished Gothic novelist. Her second novel, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), pioneered what was to become her characteristic plot of the persecuted motherless female subject to threats and imprisonment by older tyrannical males amid an Italianate and picturesque landscape; a plot she would develop to greater effect in the *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and her masterpiece *The Italian* (1797), with its towering and influential Gothic villain, Schedoni. Radcliffe famously eschewed Walpole’s marvellous occurrences and explained all her uncanny happenings away. Although *Udolpho* is set in the late sixteenth century, the events of *The Italian* take place only forty years from the novel’s present. In 1796 Matthew Lewis’s sensational tale of Satanism, incest, rape and mob violence, *The Monk*, appeared to a scandalised reading public. Lewis accepted the supernatural on its own terms, drawing inspiration from German folk tales and legends. His novel of excess established an alternative tradition of Gothic writing to that of Radcliffe and, in turn, occasioned her rebuke in the form of her *Italian*.

William Godwin took the form in new directions, developing a series of reformist political arguments in his *Things as They Are; or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) a novel about the tyranny of the class and legal systems and the importance of truth and free communication. Education and crime were also important themes in this novel of the control and manipulation of one man by another. Another key writer was Charlotte Dacre, whose *Confessions of the Nun of St Omer* (1805) and the extraordinary *Zofloya, of the Moor* (1806) confounded stereotypes of polite female Gothic. Dacre's *Zofloya* rewrote Lewis's *Monk* from a female perspective, featuring an amoral and lustful female protagonist, Victoria, and her demon lover, Zofloya. Dacre's full-blooded tales of murder, revenge and diabolic temptation had little in common with the fictions of Radcliffe or Reeve. It was left to Mary Shelley to combine the excess of Lewis with the novel of ideas of her father, Godwin, in *Frankenstein* (1818). By the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century the Gothic was showing increasing signs of staleness and was frequently parodied, most notably in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818). The last 'classic' Gothic novel of the period is generally thought to be C. R. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), an extremely influential tale involving the Gothic stereotype of the wandering immortal through a series of tales of extreme events.

A number of novelists in the 1790s deployed the novel form to participate in the political debate of the time. Numerous 'Jacobin novels' were published. Many of the novels involved plots where innocent individuals are pursued and imprisoned under an unjust social system; several have strong female characters. Charlotte Smith's novels are hard to categorise. They are sentimental fictions with strong links with both the Jacobin and Gothic novel. Her early novels are very much in the mode of radical sensibility, but her subsequent fiction, *Desmond* (1792), *Marchmont* (1796), *The Young Philosopher* (1798) and, her most popular novel, *The Old Manor House* (1793), all develop political themes about the nature of society and the treatment of women. The increasingly repressive political climate of the late 1790s led to a conservative backlash of anti-Jacobin novels celebrating the traditional values of hearth and home, including Jane West's *A Gossip's Story* (1797) and *A Tale of the Times* (1799), Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) and, more ambivalently, Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray, or Mother and Daughter* (1805).

Novels dealing with courtship and marriage were also common in the period. Frances or Fanny Burney remained a significant novelist of sensibility well into the Romantic period. Her later novels, *Cecilia* (1782), *Camilla, or, a Picture of Youth* (1796) and *The Wanderer* (1814), all deal with social and domestic issues. Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818) tackled the theme of the education and development of two sisters, and was extremely successful. It was, however, Jane Austen who developed this mode of novel to its highest state. In a series of complex and engaging comedies, Austen proved herself to be one of the most sophisticated and ironic commentators on the manners and mores of Regency England. *Northanger Abbey* (1818) satirised the conventions of female Gothic writing using the device of the naive heroine; *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) adopted the familiar narrative of two contrasting sisters as a way of outlining the dangers and pitfalls of a mode of sensibility, radicalised in the 1790s; *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) brilliantly evoked the romance of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy against the conventions of class

and social decorum; *Mansfield Park* (1814) explored the values and mores of the English landed gentry; *Emma* (1816) the relationship between an active and imaginative young woman and her social obligations; and *Persuasion* (1818) dealt with the responsibilities and duties of the gentry.

Novels of regional and national manners were also a feature of the period. Maria Edgeworth, probably the period's most highly respected novelist before Scott, initiated the form with her *Castle Rackrent* of 1800. Another important writer of Irish regional fiction, Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, wrote a series of flamboyant novels including *The Wild Irish Girl*, *A National Tale* (1806), and *O'Donnel: A National Tale* (1814), as well as the important Orientalist romance set in the seventeenth-century Indian subcontinent, *The Missionary* (1811). The Scottish novelist John Galt published a series of what he called 'theoretical histories' set in the western lowlands of Scotland, and James Hogg also published, in addition to his *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), two other studies of superstition in Scottish life, *Three Perils of Man* (1822) and *Three Perils of Woman* (1823). Sir Walter Scott dominated the Romantic novel after 1814. His first novel, *Waverly* (1814), was set against the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, pitting lowland, Enlightenment Edinburgh against the Romantic highland clan system, viewed through the eyes of the naive Romantic hero, Edmund Waverly. Other novels set in recent Scottish history followed. Scott's interests subsequently widened to take in a larger historical survey, though his theme was often the emergence of the organic nation, in novels such as *Ivanhoe: A Romance* (1819), *Quentin Durward* (1823), and *The Talisman* (1825). Scott's identity as the author of the Waverly Novels was kept secret until the 1820s. Mention should also be made of the satirical and historical romances of Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) which are hard to categorise as straightforward novels. Peacock developed the form of 'satirical-conversation' novel employing both the dialogue and the chorus (from drama) within novelistic discourse. Characteristically his novels described the conversations of a number of representative characters of the period and their foibles. In a series of novels, the most well-known being *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), Peacock satirised Romantic-period poets and writers such as Coleridge, Shelley and Byron, as well as political economists, craniologists and other contemporary intellectual types.

Romantic drama

Traditional accounts of the period have given less importance to drama and theatre than to poetry and fiction. Those figures who dominated the literature of the age did not, on the whole, produce good, quality drama capable of strong performance, although theatre was a large part of the culture of the period. The major theatres in London were Covent Garden and Drury Lane, which, since the Stage Licensing Act, held exclusive rights to stage spoken drama and opera; smaller theatres could only present plays which mixed speech and song. The most notable stage plays of the latter half of the eighteenth century were sentimental comedies such as Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) and *The School for Scandal* (1777). Other prominent dramas include Thomas Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin* (1792), Elizabeth Inchbald's *Every One Has His Faults* (1793) and her adaptation of the German playwright August Friedrich von Kotzebue's play, as *Lover's Vows* (1798) (which features in the amateur

theatricals depicted in Austen's *Mansfield Park*) as well as Hannah Cowley's *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783). Gothic melodramas were also commonplace, including George Colman the Younger's dramatisation of Godwin's *Caleb Williams* as *The Iron Chest* (1796), Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1798), C. R. Maturin's *Bertram* (1816), Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* (1802) and James Robinson Planché's adaptation of John William Polidori's 1819 tale *The Vampyre* (1820). The period also saw the emergence of the costume drama with W. T. Moncrieff's *Rochester, or Charles the Second's Merry Days* (1818) as well as the beginnings of farce in Colman's *Love Laughs at Locksmiths* (1802).

'Mental Theatre'

The major dramatic form for Romantic writers was that of the 'closet drama' or what Byron referred to as 'mental theatre'; drama to be read but not performed. As the stage was censored by the Examiner of Plays, closet drama allowed the writer more freedom to develop ideas. The most influential of such drama was probably Joanna Baillie's three-volume *A Series of Plays in which it is attempted to delineate the stronger passions of the mind* (or *Plays on the Passions*). Pre-empting some of the psychological concerns of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, Baillie used the form of closet drama to analyse the effects of the predominance of one passion, or monomania, on a single person. Her drama *De Monfort*, for instance, explores the passion of hatred and *Count Basil*, that of love. *De Monfort* was produced successfully with John Philip Kemble in the title role and Sarah Siddons playing Jane De Monfort. It was probably Byron, however, who developed furthest the notion of closet drama, or 'mental theatre' as he termed it. While Baillie used the form to try and understand overwhelming and irrational passions, Byron is more concerned with challenging conventional morality and outlining the paradoxes of orthodox thought. He does this in a series of dramas, *Manfred* (1817), *Marino Faliero* (1821), *Sardanapalus* (1821), *The Two Foscari* (1821), *Cain* (1821) and *The Deformed Transformed* (1824).

A few of the canonical Romantic writers attempted to write plays to be performed on stage. Wordsworth's psychological drama *The Borderers* was turned down by Covent Garden. Coleridge and Southey wrote *The Fall of Robespierre* in 1794 and Coleridge wrote a tragedy, *Osorio*, which was rejected for performance by Drury Lane in 1797 but later produced as *Remorse* in 1813 with some success. Shelley's *The Cenci* was also rejected by Covent Garden in 1819. Keats wrote two historical dramas intended for the theatre, *Otho the Great* (1819) and the fragmentary *King Stephen* (1819). Byron's Venetian tragedy, *Marino Faliero* was acted in 1821. Scott also wrote a series of plays for the theatre.

Texts and issues

Class, power and politics

Literary texts of the Romantic period were shaped and informed by a number of social and political issues. Many have argued that the work of the Romantics is a response to the disruptive social and economic changes in the normal patterns of life occasioned by

the growth of the factory system, the disappearance of whole classes of workers in traditional crafts, and the increasing population in cities. It is often argued that Romantic poetry shows a concern with the dignity of the individual person and a psychological concern for the distressed and alienated state of mind. Many of the Romantics believed that the disruptions in the patterns of life occasioned by the commercial and industrial process and its impersonal abstraction of the economic interests of the individual, blunted the mind and made it solitary. Against this sense of social disintegration, the Romantics demonstrated a concern with the whole, with integration, and with unity: 'The One Life', in Coleridge's phrase.

Similarly, the literature of the period reflects the turbulent political debates informed by what Percy Shelley referred to as 'the master-theme of the epoch in which we live', the French Revolution. Wordsworth, who visited France a year after the fall of the Bastille, captured his sense of youthful excitement at the potential of the event in *The Prelude*:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance

(*The Prelude* (1805) IX.692–6)

In 1790 Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* initiated a debate among supporters and opponents of the French Revolution in Britain. The initial response to the Revolution had been largely positive, the general view being that the French were freeing themselves from the tyranny of absolute monarchy and approximating their constitution to the British model of limited monarchy. This was very much the argument of the dissenting minister Richard Price's *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789), which compared the French Revolution to that of England in 1688. Burke, however, argued that the revolutionaries' lack of respect for tradition and authority, and their desire to subject everything to the test of reason rather than of experience, could only lead to political anarchy and violence. Initially, most enlightened opinion regarded Burke's book as alarmist. Mary Wollstonecraft responded with her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), then her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); the latter influentially extended the discussion to take in the political rights of women, arguing for the importance of equality of a rational education and opportunity for both sexes. Numerous other responses to Burke were penned, the most famous of these being Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (Part 1, 1791; Part 2, 1792) and William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) which both argued the reformist and liberal case. It is estimated that the two parts of Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, in its several editions, sold more than twenty thousand copies. The debate was reflected in cultural terms in a number of ways, including pamphlets, poems, dramas, novels, satires in verse and prose, cartoons and caricatures. The poet and novelist Helen Maria Williams, who had arrived in Paris in 1790, reported back on events and surveyed the prime tourist locations in her *Letters written in France* (1790). Williams kept a salon at Paris, which Wordsworth and Wollstonecraft visited, until she was imprisoned by Robespierre during the Terror. Libertarian and materialist ideas were also disseminated in the poetry of Erasmus Darwin, whose *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), *The Botanic Garden* (1791) and *Temple*

of Nature (1803) versified contemporary scientific theories presenting radical views of sexual equality in the plant world. By 1794, however, the conservative response in Britain to the Revolution was gaining the upper hand; Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*, aimed at the labouring classes, disseminated conservative notions in simple story forms, and the periodical the *Anti-Jacobin* mercilessly castigated radicals and reformers in verse satires.

4.11 The title page of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* of 1791. This was the work that initiated a major political debate about the French Revolution and politics in general. Burke's *Reflections* occasioned replies from Mary Wollstonecraft, Joseph Priestley and, most famously, Thomas Paine.

Romantic-period writers responded to this debate. As well as the series of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels, Romantic poetry engaged in one way or another with the debate. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were supporters of the Revolution up until around 1798 and they both wrote overtly political poetry. *Lyrical Ballads*, for instance, eschews a concern with fashionable life, featuring, instead, subjects from common life which could be found in every village. Wordsworth claimed that the collection expressed the belief that 'men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply' (Wu, *Romanticism*, p. 512n [A]). He affirmed that the *Ballads* are written in the language of ordinary men. William Blake sympathised with the Revolution, which he regarded as an outburst of freedom against the repressive forces of monarchy and established religion. He expressed his radical and free-thinking ideas in a series of visionary poems. In his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, he castigated social evils and political repression. The 'Chimney Sweeper' poems criticise a society which condones the use of children to undertake potentially lethal employment, which praises 'God and his priest and king' who 'make up a heaven' of the boys' 'misery'. The narrator of 'Holy Thursday' of *Experience* angrily demands, when confronted by the spectacle of charity boys and girls herded into St Paul's to give thanks to their benefactors:

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

(*Norton Anthology*, p. 90 [A])

The poem 'London' presents an apocalyptic vision of the British Empire's capital city, a place of fear and terror in the grip of political and psychological repression by the 'mind-forged manacles' of empiricist philosophy. It presents a searing indictment of the hypocrisies and cruelties of the political and religious establishment:

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

(*Norton Anthology*, p. 94 [A])

However, it is the institution of 'the marriage hearse', which creates a property in people, akin to slavery, and represses free desire, for which the narrator reserves his most scathing language. In the *Songs*, Blake is possibly arguing that both the states of a child-

like and giving Innocence, and of an adult selfishness and materialist Experience, are necessary to human development. Although the world is currently dominated by cold and hypocritical materialists (personified by Blake's mythological figure Urizen), there is a possibility that revolutionary energies may break out and imaginatively transform the world. This visionary apocalypse may be present in Blake's 'The Tyger' which presents an enigmatic and sublimely terrifying creature at a moment of cataclysmic metamorphosis:

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

(*Norton Anthology*, p. 93 [A])

The poets of the second generation of Romantic writers, however, maintained a faith in liberal and reformist politics. Most engaged was Percy Shelley who developed his political ideas in a number of works. His 'Ode to the West Wind', for instance, envisions the autumnal wind as a cleansing force, removing the diseased and corrupt, and transforming the world for a new spring and awakening. His sonnet 'England in 1819' (*Norton Anthology*, p. 771 [A]) presents a nation ruled by 'An old, mad, blind, despised and dying King'. For Shelley, princes are like mud polluting a stream, they are like parasites sucking the blood of their country, 'Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow', like satiated leeches. Referring to the 'Peterloo Massacre', he accuses the government of killing the liberty of the people but, with characteristic optimism, implies that the system of things may contain the seeds of its own destruction as the military is a two-edged sword which could be used against the established order. 'England in 1819' is a graveyard of corpses from which the glorious phantom of liberty may appear. Shelley has here vividly and comprehensively compressed national ills into fourteen packed lines, savaging the establishment of king, government and established Church as parasitic, polluting, corrupt, hypocritical and murderous.

Land and landscape

Changes in the rural and urban landscapes were reflected in the writing of the time. Oliver Goldsmith had expressed sentimental regret at rural depopulation in his *Deserted Village* (1770), and George Crabbe's *The Village* (1783) complained of the neglect of rural life. Crabbe opposed Goldsmith's sentimental idealisations with a more critical depiction of the lives of rural people, depicting their laziness and dishonesty as well as their poverty and suffering: 'the Muses sing of happy swains, / Because their Music never knew their pains' (*Norton Anthology*, p. 2887 [A]). Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* can also be read as a response to the changing conditions of rural life. In a letter of 1801 to the Whig politician Charles James Fox, Wordsworth claimed that 'by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, Houses of Industry, and the invention of soup-shops ... the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor ... have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed'. The *Ballads* take as their subject 'low and rustic life' (*Norton Anthology*, p. 264 [A]). They describe the plight of people who are on the very margin of existence: shepherds, rural labourers, the old and infirm, vagrants, beggars,

abandoned women, hysterics, the insane and, perhaps most notoriously, those like Johnny Foy, a mentally challenged child or 'Idiot Boy'. Among other things, Wordsworth draws attention to the industrial process (the spreading of manufactures), the fall in rural earnings and the rising cost in provisions occasioned by the war with France, which led to the sufferings of the rustic people. Goody Blake, in the poem 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill', is a victim of the long hours and poor returns of eighteenth-century cottage industry:

All day she spun in her poor dwelling,
And then her three hours' work at night –
Alas, 'twas hardly worth the telling,
It would not pay for candlelight.

(Wu, *Romanticism*, p. 363 [A])

During winter Goody Blake must forage for wood for her fire because 'in that country coals are dear' (ibid., p. 364). The Shepherd in 'The Last of the Flock' is forced to sell his sheep one by one to pay for food for his children, 'Ten children, sir, had I to feed – / Hard labour in a time of need!' (ibid., p. 383). Wordsworth writes of the break-up of families and of the disappearance of that class of rural worker who owns a small tract of land; a process movingly fictionalised in the poem 'Michael', which concerns an elderly shepherd who through circumstance is forced to remortgage his land and, as a consequence, lose the property when his son fails to return home after having made sufficient money to rescue it. At the end of the poem Wordsworth describes how Michael's land and family are alienated from their traditional owners, while the community within which he lived is effaced by the forces of change and improvement, 'Great changes have been wrought / In all the neighbourhood' (ibid., p. 522). Wordsworth voices a key complaint of the time about the dispersal of local rural communities into the larger national and global networks of urbanisation, colonialism and empire.

The poetry of the Northamptonshire rural labourer John Clare is deeply sensitive to the changes in the rural environment, which he writes about from the perspective of an insider. Clare was hostile to 'improvement' and enclosure; he was aware of the ecological aspects of the changes in reducing woodlands all over the country as well as destroying breeding grounds for wildlife: 'Ye banishd trees ye make me deeply sigh / Inclosure came and all your glories fell' (Clare, 'The Village Minstrel', *Early Poems*, p. 170 [A]). Clare highlights the tolls which enclosure has taken on the lives of rural workers. In his poem, 'Remembrances', he writes how:

And cross berry way and old round oaks narrow lane
With its hollow trees like pulpits I shall never see again
Inclosure like a Buonaparte let not a thing remain
It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill
And hung the moles for traitors – though the brook is running still
It runs a naked brook cold and chill

(Clare, *Major Works*, p. 260 [A])

In 'The Mores' Clare bewails the loss of the people's traditional rights to the enclosure movement:

Inclosure came and trampled on the grave
Of labour's rights and left the poor a slave
And memory's pride ere want to wealth did bow
Is both the shadow and the substance now

(Clare, *Major Works*, p. 168 [A])

Clare's poetry protests against such changes and improvements as enclosure, and bewails the loss of both the common lands and the people's customary rights, which caused numerous labourers to leave the countryside for work elsewhere. For him, enclosure is symptomatic of a new order antithetical to a communitarian view of the world, one which respects the place of wildlife and plants as well as the rights of human beings.

Throughout the period the notion of 'improvement', or the more efficient management and cultivation of land to increase its profitability, became a key concern. The improvement of the landed estate became a key theme of the time. This led to a series of debates among landscape gardeners, including Richard Payne Knight, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphry Repton, concerning the best way for art to mimic nature. Sunken fences or 'hahas' were used to mark boundaries without spoiling the vista; Arcadian temples and bogus ruins were added to please the eye.

The sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque

In aesthetic terms the categories of the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque were applied to the landscape. Edmund Burke famously defined the sublime in opposition to the beautiful in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), arguing that the sublime is occasioned by great and terrible objects whereas the beautiful is a product of small and pleasing ones. The picturesque was an eighteenth-century theory which stressed notions such as variety, irregularity, ruggedness, singularity and chiaroscuro (patterns of light and dark) in the appreciation of landscape. In this theory, landscape should be viewed as a painting, framed and mediated by the connoisseur. Ruins and beggars were especially favoured by picturesque writers. The key theorists of the movement were William Gilpin, Uvedale Price and Payne Knight. Gilpin published a series of tourist guidebooks to picturesque landscapes, popularising areas such as the Lakes, the Wye Valley, North Wales and Scotland. Picturesque notions were also applied to landscape parks.

The improvement of the grounds of estates features prominently in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, where the traditional virtues of Sir Thomas Bertram's country estate are contrasted to the fads and whimsies introduced by Mr Rushworth at Sotherton. For Austen, 'improvers' were allied with the ethically unstable characters, Henry and Mary Crawford, who bring disorder and potential tragedy to Sir Thomas's family circle. Similarly, the reader becomes fully aware of Mr Darcy's virtues and Elizabeth's prejudices in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) when the former's well-managed estate of Pemberley is viewed through Elizabeth's admiring eyes. Certainly improvement was something that many viewed with suspicion as an index of disordered moral values. In his *Rural Rides* (1830), the Tory radical William Cobbett commented upon places where new plans of 'enclosure and plantation have totally destroyed the beauty of the estate'.

4.12 Picturesque image of a Scottish landscape from William Gilpin's *Observations on Several parts of Great Britain, particularly the High-lands of Scotland, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*.

The canonical Romantic writers tended to eschew the picturesque appreciation of nature for the full-blooded sublime, exemplified by the mountains, crags and torrents of the Lake District and the Alps. Although sharing their appreciation of the topographical sites made famous by picturesque theorists, Romantic poets disliked the notion of nature as framed as in a picture, and as mediated by the practitioner of picturesque beauty. They also objected to the idea that nature could be improved by the addition of formulaic beauties, preferring, instead, a sublime and solitary encounter which became a quasi-mystical or, even, religious experience. Typical of this view of nature and the mind is that developed at length in Wordsworth's epic spiritual autobiography, *The Prelude*. This work grew from a two-part discussion of its author's childhood in the northern Lake District and the peculiar affinity between the child and his natural environment (1799), to a thirteen- (1805) and then fourteen-book (1850) discussion of the growth and development of the poet's mind. Wordsworth stressed the importance of the sublime natural scenery in developing his spiritual, moral and imaginative nature. For instance, when describing how he borrowed a boat for a night-time adventure, he feels rebuked and threatened by an imagined reciprocity in the world around him:

When, from behind that craggy Steep, till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. – I struck, and struck again,
And, growing still in stature, the grim Shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion, like a living Thing
Strode after me.

(*Norton Anthology*, p. 332 [A])

Returning the boat, the young Wordsworth is troubled for many days 'with a dim and undetermined sense / Of unknown modes of being', of 'huge and mighty Forms' that moved through his days and troubled his dreams (p. 333). Wordsworth argues that as he develops he becomes aware of his self, but also a self or presence apart from himself, that of animated nature. Nature works to purify the mind by stimulating its spiritual and imaginative responses, through intense emotional experience, often those of terror. A poem like Coleridge's 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' similarly plays with the key categories of landscape (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 428–30 [A]). It begins in picturesque mode with the poet lamenting his inability to join his friends on a walk through the Quantock Hills, due to an accident. Self-consciously luxuriating in the affectations of sensibility ('Friends, whom I never more will meet again.') and the framed picturesque delights of roughness, variety and chiaroscuro, Coleridge's mode is unconsciously heightened as he is led to contemplate his friends enjoying the sublime landscape:

gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues

As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.

This awareness of nature as the symbolical language of God is too excessive to sustain indefinitely and Coleridge returns to where he began, the lime-tree bower. Having vicariously experienced the sublime, he is now able to see the interpenetration of nature and self in the bower, celebrating the importance of the beautiful, 'Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure.'

The sublime is also celebrated in the work of the second generation of Romantic poets, though in a markedly different way. Byron exploits the fashion for sublime alpine landscape, especially in *Manfred* and the third Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Percy Shelley frequently uses the sublime in such poems as 'Mont Blanc' (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 762–6 [A]), although his sublime revises that of his predecessors in a libertarian mode. He questions whether the sublime impact made on the mind by the mountain is inherent in the object itself or is a projection of the human mind's imagining:

... . how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred and riven. – Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire, envelope once this silent snow?
None can reply – all seems eternal now.

4.13 Sublime image: John Martin, 'Manfred on the Jungfrau'. Romantic artists and writers were fascinated by the relationship of man to nature and this was frequently expressed through the image of figures on clifftops. Manfred is about to throw himself from the cliff but is restrained by a chamois hunter who leads him to safety. The episode is taken from Act I scene II of Byron's dramatic poem 'Manfred'.

Shelley is ambiguous about our feelings of the sublime. Unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge, he does not believe that sublime landscape reveals a spiritual or divine presence, the intimations of which may derive from human fantasy, rather than any divine glimmerings. Shelley sees the sublime as a powerful and destructive experience which is as likely to lead to agnosticism as belief. He implies that this scepticism and doubt of itself might undermine what were, for him, repressive forms of orthodox Christian belief and systems of political repression.

Feminist critics of Romantic writing, such as Anne Mellor, have argued that the sublime is essentially a masculine Romantic mode seldom present in the writings of female poets and novelists. Certainly, when women writers exploit the sublime, they often do it in a hesitant or apologetic way. This is true of a poem such as Barbauld's 'A Summer Evening's Meditation' (Wu, *Romanticism*, pp. 35–38 [A]) which includes an imagined tour of the universe:

To the dread confines of eternal night,
To solitudes of vast unpeopled space,
The deserts of creation, wide and wild,
Where embryo systems and unkindled suns

Sleep in the womb of chaos?

Barbauld apologetically recedes from this flight of fancy, preferring ‘the known accustomed spot’ to ‘flight so daring’. Neither does she experience the loss of self and connection with another reality which Wordsworth and Coleridge claim.

Science

The Romantics are often caricatured as opposed to scientific discovery and progress. In fact, most of the writers of the period were deeply interested in scientific enquiry. Coleridge was a friend of both the natural philosophers Thomas Beddoes and Humphry Davy, and he, Wordsworth and the Shelleys were deeply interested in the latest scientific ideas and theories. It was not so much science as such that the Romantic poets were suspicious of, but a narrow utilitarian and empirical application of science. In many ways it was the Newtonian orthodoxy which they opposed as materialist and reductive. What Newton effectively did was to banish the divine from nature and empty the world of its mystery. It was this demystification of nature that they resented. Although the vehemence of Blake’s denunciation of Newtonianism is not typical, its general drift is. Blake showed a constant and total opposition to Newton and his works. This can be seen in the well-known plate of Newton sitting on a rock, examining on the floor in front of him a geometrical figure of a triangle within a circle and measuring the base of the triangle with a pair of compasses, thus ignoring the wonders of the stars and the heavens to concentrate on abstract reasoning. In *The Song of Los* (c. 1795), Blake mythologises the institution of Enlightenment thought, whereby ‘a philosophy of five senses’ is given ‘into the hands of Newton and Locke’ by a weeping Urizen, while ‘Clouds roll heavy upon the Alps round Rousseau and Voltaire’ (*Complete Poems*, pp. 244–5). In *Jerusalem* Blake writes of the ‘Loom of Locke’ being washed by ‘the Waterwheels of Newton’. Almost as hostile is Keats’s dismissal of Newton’s science of optics in *Lamia* (1817):

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.

(II. 229–33; *Norton Anthology*, p. 924 [A])

Keats’s criticism of contemporary science’s tendency to demystify the world may have echoed Wordsworth’s warning against an overweening analytical faculty in *The Tables Turned*, whereby ‘Our meddling intellect / Misshapes the beauteous form of things – / We murder to dissect’ (Wu, *Romanticism*, p. 402 [A]). Yet Wordsworth also had a high regard for ‘great Newton’s own ethereal self’ (*Prelude* (1805). III.270) and for his achievements in natural philosophy. His main anxiety was that such scientific triumphs might obscure the higher truth of poetry. In Book V of *The Prelude*, he describes an apocalyptic dream of Coleridge’s where the dreamer encounters a Bedouin Arab who carries a stone and a shell, respectively symbols of science and of poetry. Both are precious and are to be saved from the oncoming deluge. The stone represents ‘the adamantine holds of truth / By reason built’, but the shell, the Arab tells, ‘Is something of more worth ... A God – yea, many Gods’ (II.38–9, 71–114; *Norton Anthology*, pp. 357–9 [A]).

4.14 Blake's imaginative depiction of Sir Isaac Newton making geometrical measurements on the shore of the ocean of truth, encapsulates his dismissal of eighteenth-century empirical science in favour of the creative imagination.

The Romantic poets preferred a notion of matter which was active and alive and not passive, fixed and dead as in the Newtonian system. This notion that matter is active, made up from forces of energy, attracted the young Coleridge. Although intensely admiring of Newton, he was critical of those trends in Newtonian thought which banished the first cause to the realm of the unknowable and thus provided an encouragement for materialism and atheism. Coleridge never accepted Newton's materialist assumptions about matter, preferring instead a vitalistic theory. In coming to his belief in a vitalistic universe Coleridge may have had the work of Priestley in mind. Priestley's *Disquisitions concerning Matter and Spirit* (1777) argued that every atom was a point of force, acting by means of attraction and repulsion on its neighbours. These *foci* of energy were organised by the Deity, and the physical world was made up of his energy. Like Priestley, the young Coleridge denied that matter and spirit were distinct properties. This sense of nature as vital leads in the direction of pantheism, where God is immanent in nature and not transcendent. In *The Eolian Harp* Coleridge asks,

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of Each and God of all?

(Norton Anthology, p. 427 [A])

For Coleridge, pantheism was always a tempting option but one which he struggled to resist all his life. The speculations of the Shelley circle concerning the origins and nature of the vital force were reflected in Mary Shelley's Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818, revised 1831) which functions as a critique of Enlightenment scientific aspiration. It is important to stress that such intellectual enquiries as those of Coleridge and Percy and Mary Shelley represent as much an engagement with the substantial body of scientific thought that had arisen from debates within the Enlightenment as a rejection of it.

The poet closest of all to the Enlightenment scientific project was probably Erasmus Darwin. Darwin was a polymath, a theorist as well as a botanist, a doctor as well as an inventor, who numbered James Watt and Joseph Priestley among his friends. He translated Linnaeus' *The System of Vegetables* and *The Families of Plants*. Darwin marshalled the best available botanical scholarship to present Linnaeus as accurately as possible to the British public, but it was as a poet that he succeeded in popularising the science. *The Botanic Garden* (1791) was a tribute to the power of the Linnaean system since, like the Swedish botanist, Darwin defined plants by their sexual characteristics. He also personified them so that he could portray their reproduction by analogy with human behaviour. Darwin's plants loved, courted, married and had sex with each other, sometimes in groups, sometimes in what he called 'promiscuous marriage', as in this passage:

A *hundred* virgins join a *hundred* swains,
And fond Adonis leads the sprightly trains;

Pair after pair, along his sacred groves
To Hymen's fane the bright procession moves;
Each smiling youth a myrtle garland shades,
And wreaths of roses veil the blushing maids;
Light Joys on twinkling feet attend the throng,
Weave the gay dance, or raise the frolic song;
– Which, as they pass, exulting Cupids sting
Promiscuous arrows from the sounding string;
On wings of gossamer soft Whispers fly,
And the sly Glance steals side-long from the eye.

(Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, II. 236–7 [A])

The Botanic Garden proved so popular that it made the science a fashionable pursuit. Blake, Coleridge, Crabbe and Wordsworth all took ideas and images from it. *The Botanic Garden* was not a Romantic poem. Darwin wrote playfully but made no attempt to explore the inward self in relation to what scientific exploration revealed about the world outside.

Gender and sexuality

Scholars of Romanticism have only recently begun to pay attention to the role of women writers within the period. In actual fact there were thousands of women writing. It is also becoming apparent that with the rise of the novel in this period, poetry was becoming increasingly marked out as the preserve of male poets, which required birth and breeding, as well as a common education and certain exclusive standards of shared taste. Some women wrote satires as well as sonnets and tragedies in addition to the comedy of manners; but there was a pressure to conform to notions of what was appropriate for women to write, policed by the periodicals and publishers. This is certainly the case with the epic, which, although some are written by a few women, became increasingly identified as a masculine form. Those women who did attempt to become poets often stuck to the forms of romance and the sonnet, though there are still many exceptions to this. The Romantic revival of the sonnet form, often attributed to Coleridge and Wordsworth, was actually occasioned by the publication of Charlotte Smith's popular and influential *Elegiac Sonnets* of 1784. Women writers specialised in the novel, which became an increasingly female form. This is not to say that men did not write novels, but the novels written by Scott and Godwin were described as serious historical or philosophical works, removed from the domestic subject matter of novelists like Jane Austen or Fanny Burney. Certainly there were dangers of straying too far from the accepted modes of female writing. John Wilson Croker's sarcastic review of Barbauld's satire *Eighteenth Hundred and Eleven* (1812) warned its author 'to desist from satire, which indeed is satire on herself alone; and of entreating, with great earnestness, that she will not, for the sake of this ungrateful generation, put herself to the trouble of writing any more party pamphlets in verse'. Croker's review, though not necessarily representative of male thinking in the period, was serious enough to occasion Barbauld's retirement from poetry.

Romanticism as practised by the canonical male poets has been identified with a series of concerns which are not those of the female writers of the period. Women tended to write

about their own sensibility, about feminine instinct and female duty. Women writers celebrated not the achievements of the imagination and not the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, but the workings of the rational mind in both male and female. They stressed not so much the alienated self of the male writer but instead showed a concern with family and community care and attendant practical responsibilities. This has led Stuart Curran to argue that female writers were interested more in the 'quotidian' or the domestic. Such popular women poets as Felicia Hemans and L.E.L. became synonymous with ideas of the home and hearth and God and country (Curran, 'The I Altered' [Cxi]). One characteristic sub-genre of female poetry, for instance, is the flower verse which celebrates the particular scent, texture and colour of flora, rather than a Wordsworthian concern with memory and transcendence. This concern with the quotidian can be seen in many poems; a good example is Barbauld's 'Washing-Day' which details the domestic ceremony of the weekly laundry.

Come, Muse; and sing the dreaded Washing-Day.
Ye who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,
With bowed soul, full well ye ken the day
Which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on
Too soon; – for to that day nor peace belongs
Nor comfort; – ere the first gray streak of dawn,
The red-armed washers come and chase repose.

(ll. 8–14, *Norton Anthology*, p. 37 [A])

It is unlikely any male writer would understand the regular tedium of the washing day, its relationship to the married life, its gendered specificity, and the way such domestic chores mark the passage of time, 'week, smooth sliding after week', for women who undertake 'to wash, to rinse, to wring, / To fold, and starch, and clap, and iron, and plait'. Such detailed enumeration of the business of the day argues for the gendered view of the poet, a change in the expected Romantic perspective, what Curran refers to as 'The "I" Altered'.

This difference in outlook has led Anne Mellor to argue that there are two 'Romanticisms' in the period, one 'masculine' the other 'feminine'. This for her is a gender bias not a biological distinction. Mellor argues that the 'masculine' Romantic poets have attempted to assimilate the female into their own male selves. For Mellor, more typical perhaps of the female response to nature may be Dorothy Wordsworth's 'The Floating Island'. Here Dorothy describes a 'slip of earth' loosed into the middle of a lake which provides 'the warbling birds' that visit, and the insects that live there with food and shelter, 'a peopled world'. The life of the island is transient and fragile, passing away to be buried 'beneath the glittering lake'. In the metaphor of the floating island, Mellor argues that Dorothy finds a metaphor for her female self: nurturing, kind but wandering and insecure, in contrast to the more confident 'egotistical sublime' of her brother (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, pp. 154–7 [Cxi]).

Romantic poetry contains several alluring and destructive females. They feature prominently in Coleridge's verse, including the 'Nightmare Life in Death' of his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'; who, like Beatrice, in Lewis's *The Monk* 'thicks man's blood with cold' (*Norton Anthology*, p. 435 [A]). The character is explored in a more complex

and sophisticated way in *Christabel*, which features an ambiguously beautiful woman rescued by the young girl of the poem's title, who subsequently preys on her and takes over her mind, rather like a vampire. Coleridge's poem contains a scene in which Geraldine reveals her true nature to Christabel before the two women sleep together:

Her silken robe and inner vest,
Dropped to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! Her bosom and half her side –
A sight to dream of, not to tell.

(ll. 250–3; *Norton Anthology*, p. 455 [A])

Feminist critics have also accused him of demonising female sexuality with such obvious hints of lesbianism. Geraldine's seduction of Christabel is a parody of the normative male and female romance, where the elder female adopts the role of the male seducer, rather than the preferred role for the period of nurturing wife and mother. A similar character appears in Keats's richly ambiguous poem of the serpent woman, *Lamia*. Lamia, a transformed snake, seduces and captures the youth she loves and together, away from the public gaze, they enjoy a sensual and loving idyll, only destroyed when Lycius's tutor, Apollonius, reveals her true nature, resulting in the death of both lovers. Keats's depiction of Lamia is remarkable for the sympathy accorded to her. In some ways she is the Keatsian ideal woman, a mixture of saint and whore. As a freshly transformed creature she is virgin, but she is also extremely knowledgeable of the arts of love:

A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

(l.189–99; *Norton Anthology*, pp. 914–15 [A])

She is a 'virgin purest lipp'd' yet 'in the lore of love deep learned to the red heart's core'. Her double nature is important in the poem as a whole. Is she here nothing more than a male fantasy? It is also important to note that Lamia is not just a predator, but the answer to Lycius's prayers to Jove. He has been praying at Jove's sacrificial altar for love and Jove heard his vows, and 'better'd his desire'. He is not an unwilling victim.

Nationhood, empire and the Orient

What we describe as the Romantic movement coincided with the beginnings of a modern British imperialism which involved the governance and exploitation of increasingly large portions of the globe as the nineteenth century wore on. It also involved conflict with other imperial formations of the time, some expansive and others in decline: European empires such as the French and Russian, and non-European empires such as the Turkish

Ottoman and the Qing Empire of China. Romantic writers were not themselves imperialists in the literal sense of the term, though some of them became implicated in the imperial process: Coleridge, for instance, acted as a civil servant for the Governor of Malta, Sir Alexander Ball, and Charles Lamb and Thomas Love Peacock both worked for the British East India Company. Many Romantic-period writers – the Wordsworths, Coleridge, De Quincey, and Jane Austen – had family who were involved in colonial trade or empire in one way or another, and it certainly impinged on their consciousness as a pressing fact of life. This was also the period in which historians, like Linda Colley, argue that the idea of the British nation was ‘forged’ (in both senses of the word). Colley claims that Britishness was defined against the ‘others’ of Catholic religion and the French nation (*Britons* [ciii]). We could widen this also to include the various other peoples, races and religions that the British encountered in their imperial history. The novels of Sir Walter Scott, for instance, depict the formation of the modern British state against a series of others, notably Highland Scotland. Many of Scott’s novels are about conflicts between opposing cultures: *Ivanhoe* (1819) is about war between Normans and Saxons and *The Talisman* (1825) is about conflict between Christians and Muslims. His novels about Scottish history deal with clashes between the new English culture and the older Scottish ways.

The extent to which Romantic writing was complicit with or critical of the processes of colonialism and empire is difficult to gauge. William Cowper attacked the rapaciousness and irresponsibility of colonial greed in his *The Task* of 1785:

Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far ‘tis true, but not for nought.
(l.673–5; Fairer and Gerrard, *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, p. 503 [A])

The responsibility and accountability of the metropolitan government for the treatment of other cultures was becoming a cause of increasing concern and was an important issue in the trial of Warren Hastings for his administration of Bengal from 1786 onwards. The speeches of Edmund Burke, who prosecuted the case against Hastings, were among some of the manifestations of colonial guilt at the centre of British political life. Certainly there are many affirmations of the manifest destiny of Britons to civilise the world in Romantic writers. Wordsworth’s *Excursion* (1814) contains the Wanderer’s vision:

So the wide wide waters, open to the power,
The Will, the instincts, and appointed needs
Of Britain, do invite her to cast off
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth;
Bound to establish new communities
On every shore whose aspect favours hope
Of bold adventure
Your Country must complete
Her glorious destiny. Begin even now.

(Wordsworth, *Excursion*, pp. 295, 299 [A])

The Wanderer predicts that the world will look to Britain for moral and cultural as well as political leadership, and that the country’s imperial future will be glorious. Coleridge, in

later life, similarly argued that ‘Colonisation is not only a manifest expedient – but an imperative duty on Great Britain. God seems to hold out his finger to us over the sea.’ Similarly, a political opponent of the Lake poets, Anna Laetitia Barbauld argues for the identical linkage between colonisation, language and culture in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*:

Wide spreads thy race from Ganges to the pole,
O’er half the western world thy accents roll:
... Thy stores of knowledge the new states shall know,
And think thy thoughts, and with thy fancy glow;
Thy Lockes, thy Paleys shall instruct their youth,
Thy leading star direct their search for truth;
Beneath the spreading Platan’s tent-like shade,
Or by Missouri’s rushing waters laid,
‘Old father Thames’ shall be the port’s theme,
Of Hagley’s woods the enamoured virgin dream,
And Milton’s tones the raptured ear enthrall,
Mixt with the roar of Niagara’s fall.

(ll. 81–96; Wu, *Romanticism*, p. 46 [A]).

Orientalism

The Romantic age has been described as the ‘Oriental Renaissance’ as the growing European fascination with, and discovery of, Eastern languages and literatures fuelled the interest of writers and their readers for Oriental subjects. *The Thousand and One Nights* (which became known as *The Arabian Nights*) were tales collected and translated by Antoine Galland into French from 1704 (and English translations appeared immediately). The *Nights* established a fascination with an East that was magical, paradisaical, sensual, but also cruel and despotic; the abiding symbol for which was the harem or seraglio. This exoticised and often eroticised East easily became confused in the reader’s mind with the actual East. Many Orientalist writers, such as Sir William Jones in his many translations as well as original compositions modelled on Hindu writing, regarded the East as a source of imaginative and creative renewal, a reading of the East we might find in Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’. In recent years, however, what was once viewed as a sympathetic engagement with the East, or alternatively dismissed as escapism and exoticism, has come to be considered in a much more suspect, if not sinister light. Post-colonial critics such as Edward Said (*Orientalism* [Ciii]) have argued that Europeans use the East oppositionally to define their own self image as rational and modern. Orientalism was not simply a literary movement but is present in many art forms of the period, including music, theatre, visual art and architecture.

Here Barbauld anticipates nineteenth-century British cultural imperialism, a process by which the colonised accept the hegemony of the culture of the coloniser. Certainly the Romantic canon of Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth did become a key part of the cultural imperialism of Britain’s domination of nearly one-quarter of the terrestrial globe.

Robert Southey’s Oriental epic *Thalaba* (1801) can be seen as an Orientalist text which uses the East to explore western concerns. The poem describes how its militant Muslim

hero suppresses the older superstitious religions of his lands. His iconoclastic destruction of the satanic sorcerers of the Domdaniel Cave is a metaphor for Southey's militant Protestant abhorrence of Catholicism. Similarly, *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) details the Indian superstitions of the Hindus as an idolatry to be suppressed by a civilising Protestant form of colonialism. Byron also exploited the current fashion for the Oriental in his 'Turkish Tales'. He prided himself on the authenticity of these tales and the accuracy of their detail or costume. There is no doubt, however, that he understood the marketability of poetry on Oriental subjects. In a letter of 1813 to Thomas Moore he advised the Irish poet who would write the important

4.15 Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* of 1817 was an extremely popular work of Romantic Orientalism. This illustration of the opening of the frame tale is taken from an Edwardian edition published in 1904.

Oriental romance, *Lalla Rookh* (1817), to 'stick to the East' as the 'only poetical policy'. Byron was aware of what we might call the commodification of culture and of the market forces which drive the process. He was investing his cultural capital in an expanding market driven by imperial and colonial imperatives. His Tales were commercially extremely successful: *The Giaour* (1813) ran into thirteen editions and sold over 12,000 copies and *The Corsair* (1814) sold an unprecedented 10,000 copies on the first day of its publication. The critical reception of the Tales was also, on the whole, favourable, with reviewers praising the accuracy and local colour of the poems. Post-colonial criticism, however, argues that Byron's construction of the East is simply that, a construction, a projection of the subject's desires and anxieties, though such critics differ as to the extent that this is complicit or resistant to the contemporary processes of empire which Byron opposed. Percy Shelley also exploited the East in a series of visionary poems and dramas, including *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), 'The Witch of Atlas' (1824), and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) which stressed the redemptive aspects of Prometheus's soulmate, Asia. Like Sir William Jones and Coleridge, Shelley in such poems genders the East as female and represents it as a source of renewal, if not redemption; an alternative to a northern and increasingly puritanical Christianity, as represented in Southey's Oriental works. The fascination and fear occasioned by the East featured strongly in Thomas De Quincey's powerful *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) which recounted the events of his life and his entanglement with the drug opium in sensational detail. The *Confessions* contain a series of Oriental opium nightmares complete with vengeful Asiatic deities and vicious crocodiles delivering cancerous kisses to their victims. De Quincey's obsession with the East as place of both desire and dread is often explained as a displacement of the anxieties of his own psychopathology.

Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

Many Romantic-period writers wrote against the transatlantic slave trade. Blake's 'Little Black Boy' from his *Songs of Innocence* (*Norton Anthology*, p. 84 [A]), for instance, raises issues about the representation of slaves and the limits of the abolitionists' sympathy. His black boy accepts the hierarchies of colour which the poem's readership affirms despite their humanitarian feelings:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,

And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.

Blackness, rather than having any positive associations, is equated with bereavement in the traditional Christian semiotics of Evangelical abolitionist writing. The boy has imbibed this view of colour from his mother who ascribes their shared blackness to the action of the sun, a kind of degeneration from an original and untarnished white. The poem concludes with a vision of inter-racial fraternity round the 'tent of God' with the black boy shading the white English boy from the searing and coruscating radiance of God's love:

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee.
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

4.16 The first plate of Blake's illustrated poem 'The Little Black Boy' from his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794).

The boy has assimilated a Eurocentric view of the world, accepting the Christian notion of a white male father as God, whom he desires to resemble, to 'be like him' and be loved by him. Blake's poem represents a speaker in a state of innocence and the poem may function, as other poems in the series, as an ironic rebuttal of the hypocritical Christian evangelicalism the poet so despised.

Blake's illuminated poem, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), made more explicit the connections between racial and gender oppression. Blake may here be elaborating on Mary Wollstonecraft's comments on the exclusion of race and gender from the eighteenth-century notion of the rational. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) she comments:

Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subjected to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man? Is this not indirectly to deny woman reason?

(p. 235 [A])

Blake elaborates on the psychology of the colonialist Theotormon's mental imprisonment as well as on his oppression of both woman and African in the person of Oothoon, a victim of colonial and sexual violence. Oothoon is raped by the slave-driver Bromion to impregnate her and thus increase her market value. Theotormon represents the wavering opponent of slavery, disgusted by the practice but unable to extricate himself from the false ideology of the time into opposing the practice outright. Certainly Bromion's boast encapsulates the slaver's desire for total ownership of the slave, with the physical and sexual domination symbolised by the branding of his name into their flesh:

Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south:
Stamp with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun:

They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the scourge:
Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent.

(plate 1. ll. 20–3; *Norton Anthology*, p. 104 [A])

Wollstonecraft's equation between women and slavery was not shared by all, but it did indicate a female sensitivity to the slave trade. This was because the dictates of sensibility allowed women to be possessed of finer feelings and a more acute moral awareness than men, while debarring them from the public and political sphere. Anti-slavery, which was deemed a moral issue, was an area of public concern where women could legitimately express their feelings. Additionally, women were the primary purchasers and domestic managers of the produce of the slave trade, sugar. Women were certainly prominent in the boycott of sugar and other produce of slave labour during the popular campaign of 1792 and many wrote against it. Hannah More's celebrated poem *Slavery* of 1788 was a strong attack on the trade with its depiction of horrors such as the 'burning village', the separation of families, the resulting slave suicides and so on. Her argument against the trade, is that it is unnatural to sell human beings:

What wrongs, what injuries does Oppression plead,
To smooth the horror of th' unnatural deed?
What strange offence, what aggravated sin?
They stand convicted of a darker skin!
Barbarians, hold! Th' opprobrious commerce spare,
Respect His sacred image which they bear.
Though dark and savage, ignorant and blind,
They claim the privilege of kind;
Let malice strip them of each other plea,
They still are men, and men should still be free

(ll. 131–40; Wu, *Women Romantic Poets*, p. 46 [A])

More's attack on the trade concedes so much to racist thinking that it damns the Africans to a state of savagery and benightedness, excluded from rationality; they, like animals, can feel but cannot think. Throughout, More develops the Christian semiotics of light and darkness to create a vision of Africa as lacking in light and civilisation. Ultimately, More places her faith in two things: Christianity and commerce. The light of the Gospel will civilise the Africans, until then devoted to pagan superstition, and capitalist endeavour will convert their chattel status to that of free labourers hired and fired at the whim of the market. More upholds the notion of colonialism as the white man's burden, bringing the light of the gospel to each benighted soul and making them free.

Olaudah Equiano and the slave narrative

The most important text about slavery in the period is one published by a former slave known, in his lifetime, as Gustavus Vassa, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789). Equiano's *Narrative* is, by far, the most sophisticated piece of writing by an eighteenth-century black British writer, and one of the most interesting of all autobiographies of the period. Equiano tells the story of his life as an Igbo villager (now Nigeria), kidnapped and sold into slavery by Africans from another village. Sold on to the coast, Equiano experiences the horrors of the

Middle Passage, afterwards working as a slave on a plantation in Virginia. He is later sold to a lieutenant in the Royal navy, Michael Pascal, who renames him Gustavus Vassa. Equiano's narrative tells of his visits to Britain, his service in the Royal Navy during the Seven Years' War and his slavery in the West Indies, after which he purchases his freedom in 1746. In 1776, he takes part in Constantine Phipps's voyage to reach the North Pole, along with Midshipman Horatio Nelson. The *Narrative* is also a spiritual autobiography which charts Equiano's conversion to an Evangelical form of Christianity. The *Narrative* is the first by a black writer to be penned personally, rather than dictated. Although Equiano's biographer, Vincent Carretta, has recently questioned the authenticity of the earlier chapters of the narrative, presenting evidence that Equiano may have been born in South Carolina, the *Narrative* is a fascinating reconstruction of the hybrid subjectivity of a slave writing in a language not his own and expressing himself through the genre of Protestant spiritual autobiography. Equiano's narrative of his childhood depicts a society which is civilised and ordered, with its customs and rituals, a far cry from the dark savagery represented by More and other Evangelical writers. The 'slave narrative' was a special and popular form of autobiography. Several important life stories by former slaves were published in addition to Equiano's, including Ignatius Sancho's *Letters* (1782), Ottobah Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Commerce of the Human Species* (1787), John Jea's *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea* (1815), Robert Wedderburn's *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824) and Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (1831).

Readings

William Wordsworth, 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798' (1798)

William Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey,' (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 258–62 [A]) is one of the most celebrated and discussed poems of the Romantic period. It typifies what M. H. Abrams regarded as one of Romanticism's quintessential forms, the 'greater Romantic lyric', but also corresponds to an older and established kind of poem, the loco-descriptive or prospect poem. For more recent historically minded critics it has become the site of a fierce controversy between those who regard it as an exemplary poem about the relationship between the mind and nature, and those who see it as a deliberate attempt to evade the social and political realities of the time. To understand the poem and the controversies surrounding it we need to know something of its composition. By 1798 Wordsworth (then twenty-six) was living with his sister Dorothy in Somerset, with Coleridge as a close neighbour. It is thought that around this time both Wordsworth and Coleridge began to lose their commitment to their shared radical beliefs and become more conservative in outlook. In 1801 they both were able to support the continuance of the war against France and, in later years, they both became supporters of the government. Their poetry stressed the restorative and beneficial powers of nature to heal

and make well the divided mind. This concern with the powers and influence of nature and its interaction with the individual self came to be regarded as one of the hallmarks of what we call Romantic poetry, often defined in terms of its interest in nature, the self and the imagination.

In 1798 the two poets published a collection of verse entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, which contained the poem, 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798'. Unlike many of the other poems in the volume, which concerned themselves with rural issues such as poverty and unemployment and which were written in a ballad form, 'Tintern Abbey' is a meditative poem in measured blank verse which deals with the inner life of the poet. The poem was written on a walking tour of the Wye Valley made by Wordsworth during 10–13 July 1798. The site was a common tourist stopping-off place, made famous by William Gilpin's picturesque guidebooks of the region. This was not the first time that Wordsworth had visited the area around the abbey. Five years earlier, in 1793, he had arrived at the spot during a period of mental turmoil. He had just returned from revolutionary France and become separated from his lover, Annette Vallon, by whom he fathered a daughter. Britain was then at war with revolutionary France and Wordsworth felt alienated from his own country because of his sympathies for the Revolution, as well as depressed by the increasingly violent turn which the Revolution had taken. The poem is an intensely personal examination of Wordsworth's own inner thoughts (it is hard to separate speaker from poet in this case) and is concerned with the growth and development of his moral and imaginative self. The poem celebrates Wordsworth's rediscovery of the capacity of feel.

4.17 This illustration from William Gilpin's popular tour guide to the Wye Valley features the ruin of Tintern Abbey as a key picturesque site complete with vagrants in the foreground.

The poem begins in the present and refers to Wordsworth's first visit to Tintern Abbey in 1793: 'Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters!' (ll. 1–2). The first twenty lines or so suggest the tranquillity and harmony that the poet has now achieved in the present. The signs of human activity, the cottages, the pastoral farms, the orchards and the wreaths of smoke, all blend in with the landscape as human and natural activity coalesce and merge: 'Green to the very door' (l. 17). The opening few lines evoke a calm and meditative mood. Wordsworth now moves from the external landscape to describe his own inner state of consciousness. He describes what he has gained personally since his first visit to the Wye Valley. He has been able to carry the landscape he first saw in his mind and this has calmed and healed his psyche. The memory of the landscape first glimpsed in 1793 has brought him restoration in his 'hours of weariness'. This 'weariness' is associated, rather vaguely by the poet, with the materialism of city or urban life (ll. 23–30). More than this, Wordsworth claims that the memory of the landscape has led to a growth in his moral sense. It has made him a better man (ll. 30–5). He says that he has also attained a sense of spirituality from the vision he had of the Wye Valley those five years ago. He describes a state of heightened perception in which he is no longer aware of the physical and material forms of nature but is instead aware of an inner, spiritual force which permeates the natural world and exists within

humanity as well. The experience comes through sense but transcends the senses; the physical eye is 'made quiet by the power / Of harmony'. At such moments, Wordsworth claims that we achieve spiritual insight and that we see 'into the life of things' (ll. 33–48); a 'blessed mood' in which we lose our sense of self and become aware of a transcendent sense of unity, and of ourselves as a part of that unity. Thus Wordsworth claims he has gained three things since his first visit to the Wye Valley: the soothing influence that the landscape has had on his mind, making him feel less stressed and alienated; his moral sense has been increased almost unconsciously; and he has received the gift of spirituality. The experience of the landscape has been absorbed into the mind and contemplated upon over a period of years, what Wordsworth referred to as 'recollection in tranquility' in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*.

The poem now moves back in time by five years. Wordsworth remembers how, in July 1793, he had visited the Wye Valley. He remembers his state of mental anguish, describing himself as behaving 'more like a man / Flying from something that he dreads' than someone seeking 'the thing he loved' (ll. 70–1). His attitude to nature has changed from the days of his childhood when the forms of nature are an appetite, something desired and consumed without thinking; an animal passion (ll. 76–80). He is here dimly aware of another presence in nature than that of himself, but not aware of what it is. We thus move in nature from the thoughtless enjoyment of nature in childhood, to the consciousness of the reality of nature's presence in adulthood. Since 1793 he claims to now look on nature with a consciousness of the problems and troubles of the world: 'The still, sad music of humanity' (l. 91). Such problems (which include the social and political) are represented as timeless and ever recurring. Wordsworth argues that we move from a child-like and unthinking joy in our relationship with nature, to a state where we become aware of the ties we have to other people, and from that state to a mystical awareness of the sense of the divine presence in nature. This inevitably means the loss of the child's vision of the unity of man and nature. Nevertheless, he claims that he has been recompensed for this loss of that original paradisaical state, by a sense of the visionary intensity he occasionally experiences when contemplating the natural landscape:

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

(ll. 94–101)

Wordsworth describes a sublime moment of vision, of the interaction between the outer world of the landscape and the inner world of the poet: the subjective poet and the objective world of nature. It is an inter-penetration of man and nature achieved through sense perception. It is by perceiving 'the light of setting suns', 'the round ocean' and the 'blue sky' that we gain an impression of the spiritual, glimpsing the divine through

natural objects. The spiritual is imaged as a motion, a movement and a power, something active. By a deliberate syntactic ambiguity the motion and the spirit is made to belong to both the external world and to the 'mind of man'. The poem takes the two worlds, the inner and the outer, at the point of their intersection. Wordsworth is claiming that it is such moments as these, moments of visionary intensity when we see into the 'life of things', which have restored him to sanity and balance. Love of nature thus leads to love of man, it reconciles us to humanity. Nature is described as 'the anchor of his purest thoughts' and the 'nurse, guide and guardian of his moral being' (ll. 109–10). Wordsworth is restored as a person, mentally, morally and socially, by the power of nature.

The final verse paragraph of the poem returns us to 1798, when the poem was written, and looks forward to the future. The poet imagines his sister Dorothy, who accompanied him on his second visit to the Wye Valley, as a kind of 'second self' for the poet. We return to the details of the landscape that are described in the first few lines, to the external scene it began with: 'the green pastoral landscape', the 'steep woods', the 'lofty cliffs' (ll. 157–8), which echo the opening description. The poem ends where it began, a unified and circular journey in time from the present to the past, then into the future and back to the present.

This is the scope of the poem. Wordsworth argues that the human self is essentially unified, unified over time by the power of memory. It is through communion with nature that this self is developed, made better, and perfected. This is a message Wordsworth puts into his poetry and passes on to his readership. Up until recently this is very much how the poem has been interpreted. In the 1980s, however, a number of critics opposed this reading of the poem and attempted to demonstrate how the poetry tries to present an 'ideology' or system of ideas, which is conservative and oppressive. The new historicist critic Jerome McGann argued that 'the scholarship and criticism of Romanticism and its works are dominated by a Romantic Ideology, by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations' (McGann, *Romantic Ideology*, p. 1 [Ci]). He claimed that a poem like 'Tintern Abbey' fabricates a false view of the life of the time by presenting an idealistic image of society, which serves the interests of the then ruling classes and helps to maintain the status quo. Wordsworth is, according to McGann, claiming that problems such as human suffering and poverty, 'the still sad music of humanity', are evaded or displaced into the realm of the aesthetic, or the world of imagination. Rather than trying to improve things socially and politically, the solution to all our problems is imaginative and not political. The strongest criticism of 'Tintern Abbey' as an act of deliberate bad faith, however, was made by Marjorie Levinson, who pointed out that although 'Tintern Abbey' features in the title, the abbey itself is not described and is absent from the poem (Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*, pp. 15, 14–57 [Ci]). Why, she asks, would a poet draw attention to the famous ruin and then ignore it? Possibly because the abbey was ruined in the time of Henry VIII when the monarch took over its lands during the Reformation, when England broke away from the Church of Rome, an intrusion of the political and historical into the poem Wordsworth might wish to avoid. The abbey in Wordsworth's day was not in fact a picturesque and pleasing prospect. William Gilpin, describing the scene in his influential picturesque travel book, *Observations on the River Wye* (1782), noted that 'the poverty and

wretchedness of the inhabitants were remarkable. They occupy little huts, raised among the ruins of the monastery, and seem to have no employment but begging; as if a place once devoted to indolence could never again become the seat of industry.' Wordsworth's poem avoids mentioning the beggars. Instead, he dwells on the 'wreathes of smoke' (l. 17) seen from a distance which might 'seem' to come from the fires of 'vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods, / Or of some Hermit's cave' (ll. 20–1). Wordsworth poeticises the facts of poverty. More than this the Wye Valley itself was not simply the beautiful and unspoilt landscape which the poet claimed to encounter but a busy industrial scene. Gilpin comments that within 'half a mile of it are carried on great iron-works; which introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity' and that the Wye becomes 'ouzy, and discoloured' with 'sludgy shores'. The industrial furnaces on the banks of the Wye consumed charcoal, sending up wreaths of smoke, and the river itself was full of shipping, carrying coal and timber from the Forest of Dean.

Levinson believes that Wordsworth has deliberately excluded these signs of poverty and wretchedness and of the great industrial activity going on a mere half a mile away down river, which is soiling and polluting the river, because it would ruin his idealistic picture of a mind experiencing harmony with nature. She argues that Wordsworth has falsified the scene he describes in an attempt to exclude all those historical and industrial things which would destroy the pastoral effect he is trying to create: 'We are bound to see that Wordsworth's pastoral prospect is a fragile affair, artfully assembled by acts of exclusion' (p. 32). His poem is thus ideological; it displaces all the problems and difficulties of an agricultural society in the early throes of industrialisation into the realm of the artistic and imaginative. It is an act of 'false consciousness' which functions to maintain the present system of society by directing people's discontent not into the area of the political but into the realm of the transcendent and the natural. The poem draws attention to that which is excluded from the poem: to absences and evasions. It is a more interesting poem to her because of those very exclusions.

Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)

Regarded by many as the most significant novelist of the Romantic period, Jane Austen bears a complicated relationship with the literature of time. In many ways her literary models and enthusiasms were the writers of the eighteenth century, with whom she has much in common, rather than the new forms of Romanticism, with its privileging of emotionalism, freedom from restraint and wild and solitary landscapes; however, in more recent years her work has been more firmly located in the ideas and debates of the time. *Sense and Sensibility* (Austen [A]) was projected as an epistolary novel, entitled *Elinor and Marianne*, in 1795, at the height of the debates about sensibility and its relationship to politically radical ideas. The 1790s was the period when the 'Jacobin' novel of ideas was current and, from 1793 onwards, the beginnings of the anti-Jacobin backlash in Britain. Austen worked on the novel but did not publish it until 1811 as *Sense and Sensibility*, when debates about sensibility had become rather dated. In the 1790s the topic was certainly in the public consciousness. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) had caused a political sensation because of its author's attitude to the status of women. Her opponent Richard Polwhele had referred to her as 'a hyena in petticoats' and an 'unsex'd female'. Wollstonecraft's own life was itself

sensational, with her tempestuous affair with the adventurer Gilbert Imlay (whose daughter she bore), her obsession with the painter Fuseli, and her subsequent attempted suicide, all unwisely revealed in her husband William Godwin's *Memoirs* of her life of 1798. Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798) added to her notoriety by courageously discussing the issue of female desire. Austen's Marianne Dashwood shares many of Wollstonecraft's ideas and attitudes and it is very tempting to conclude that elements of her character are, to some extent, based on that of Wollstonecraft.

The novel takes the very familiar plotline of the parallel, but contrasted, lives and temperaments of two sisters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, who, at first glance, seem to embody the opposing qualities of reason and emotionalism or sensibility. In fact, the characterisation of the sisters is much more complex than this suggests, and both sisters demonstrate mixed and contrary qualities in their behaviour. Austen, however, privileges Elinor by making the narrative of the novel correspond to her consciousness. By a technique known as 'free indirect speech', Austen presents much of the action of the novel from Elinor's perspective, sharing Elinor's thoughts and feelings with the reader. The two leading men in the novel, the dashing handsome John Willoughby and the shy and dutiful Edward Ferrars, who court Marianne and Elinor respectively, are also similarly contrasted in terms of their behaviour. Nevertheless, the novel is a satire on the fashionable sensibility of the 1790s, as well as a warning about the dangers it could pose if taken too far. As we have seen, by the 1790s sensibility had become radicalised and identified with the democratic politics of the French Revolution and those who supported it in Britain, the 'English Jacobins'. By looking at certain key themes in the novel we can better see how it relates to the context in which it was produced.

4.18 An illustrated title page of an 1833 edition of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* showing two contrasting scenes from the novel involving Elinor and Marianne.

The Romantic period has been characterised as one where nature is given a new sense of importance and becomes a key subject for art. Austen also is a writer who deals with nature, but rather than the sublime natural environment of the Lakes or the Swiss Alps, it tends to be the managed English country estate or park that excites her. Austen is also interested not in the details of nature but the person's response to it. Marianne is identified with an emotional and sentimental view of the natural world, which was one of the hallmarks of sensibility. A preference for the natural over the artificial also indicates a political preference for primitive and unspoilt humanity, which the philosopher Rousseau had argued is tarnished by society. This issue was very much a part of the debate about the French Revolution, with the English Jacobins, like Paine and Wollstonecraft, arguing for the natural goodness and benevolence of humanity and its oppression by government and society, while conservatives, like Burke, argued that humanity is naturally fallen and that government is needed to improve and civilise it.

Marianne is very much the heroine of sensibility. She is individualistic, emotional, impatient, rude, indiscreet, passionate, indulgent and enthusiastic. Like her lover Willoughby, she prefers the natural and unadorned to the formal and restrained. When leaving the family home of Norland, Marianne expresses her feelings in an open and excessive way, "And you, ye well-known trees! ... No; you will continue the same;

unconscious of the pleasure or the regret you occasion, and insensible of any change in those who walk under your shade! – But who will remain to enjoy you?” (p. 29). Later in the novel, after Willoughby’s desertion of her, Marianne expresses her melancholy in remembering the autumns at Norland, reminding Elinor of her emotional delight at the falling of the autumn leaves there, ‘ ‘How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! ... Now there is no one to regard them.”’ To which she receives a somewhat tart response: ‘ ‘It is not everyone’, said Elinor, ‘who has your passion for dead leaves’ ’ (p. 87). The debate about landscape is epitomised in an exchange between Marianne and Edward. Marianne argues that landscape must be experienced personally and that one should respond to it intuitively, arguing that the ‘admiration of landscape’ has become formulaic and a matter of fashion and ‘jargon’: ‘Everybody pretends to feel and tries to describe with the taste and elegance of him who first defined what picturesque beauty was.’ Edward’s appreciation of landscape, however, is anti-picturesque:

I call it a very fine country – the hills are steep, the woods seem full of fine timber, and the valley looks comfortable and snug – with rich meadows and several neat farmhouses scattered here and there. It exactly answers my idea of a fine country, because it unites beauty with utility – and I dare say it is a picturesque one too, because you admire it; I can easily believe it to be full of rocks and promontories, grey moss and brush-wood, but these are all lost on me – I know nothing of the picturesque.

(p. 95)

Edward’s notion of a ‘fine country’ is based on the use to which that country is put; he prefers the prospect of a well-managed and peopled landscape, with farms and labourers, rejecting picturesque notions of beauty derived from ruins and poverty. His vision here is a social one rather than the individual and emotional response called for by Marianne, for whom the picturesque itself has become too formulaic. Marianne’s preference for picturesque wildness is also dangerous. It is on one of her ‘delightful twilight walks’, when she strays to the wilder parts of the estate, where the ‘trees were the oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest’, that she contracts a serious fever (p. 286).

Sensibility, while it stressed spontaneity and emotion, was also a very literary fashion, and an appreciation of literature was a required accomplishment for its adherents. Marianne, who is an admirer of Cowper and Scott, compares Edward unfavourably to Willoughby for the lack of emotion he displays when reading. She tells Elinor it would have broken her heart to hear her lover ‘read with so little sensibility’ (pp. 19–20). She argues that an utter identity of feelings must subsist between two lovers. Willoughby, it appears, has views and tastes exactly similar to Marianne’s: ‘The same books, the same passages were idolized by each’ (p. 49). Despite her stress on spontaneity, Marianne has learnt much of her sensibility from books, a paradox which remained at the heart of the fashion. The performative nature of sensibility is humorously demonstrated in Austen’s depiction of Marianne’s reaction to Willoughby’s initial desertion of her. Marianne is clearly performing a role; the sleeplessness, the weeping and the sighing are all part of a convention of behaviour she must follow. Her doleful playing of Willoughby’s favourite songs and her reading of their favourite books is described as the ‘indulgence of feeling’

undertaken until 'her heart was so heavy that no further sadness could be gained'. This is a 'nourishment of grief' and a courting of 'misery'. Marianne is, however, basically good-natured and good-humoured and unable to support such 'violence of affliction' which lapses into a 'calmer melancholy' (pp. 83–4). This comic scene contrasts with Marianne's genuine and serious illness later in the novel, brought on by the realisation of Willoughby's final betrayal and her subsequent mental anguish.

Marianne believes that first impressions are more likely to be true than second thoughts as such impressions are spontaneous and therefore derive from our innate moral sense. She argues that there could be nothing improper about what she has done, for if there had been, she would have known so at the time: 'we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure' (p. 69). Similarly, Marianne, at the beginning of the novel does not accept the possibility of 'second attachments' in love. For Elinor what is worrying about her views is the 'unfortunate tendency of setting propriety at nought' (pp. 57). What is ethically dangerous for Austen in Marianne's behaviour is that she stresses the individual over the communal and social and this has potentially tragic consequences. Furthermore, because sensibility is a performed role, as Hannah More put it 'these fair marks, reluctant I relate, / These lovely symbols may be counterfeit' ('Sensibility', ll. 275–6; Wu, *Romanticism*, p. 29–30 [A]). While Marianne may be sincere in her expressions of feeling, others may not, and the role of the man of sensibility is easy to fake by unscrupulous libertines. John Willoughby acts this part with superb accomplishment. He is immensely attractive, alluring and charismatic, especially in contrast to the shy and despondent Edward and the thoughtful and reflective Colonel Brandon. He makes his initial heroic appearance rescuing Marianne when she twists her ankle unwisely racing down a hill. The impression he makes on everyone is immediate: he speaks 'in a manner so frank and so graceful, that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received additional charms from his voice and expression' (p. 44) and is 'exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart' (p. 50). He is, unlike Edward, an excellent reader. Beneath his charm, however, he conceals a callous and selfish nature. He has already abandoned and ruined one girl, the pregnant Eliza Williams, and when his financial irresponsibility leads him to court and marry an heiress he cruelly deserts Marianne. Willoughby is no one-dimensional villain and even Elinor is in danger of succumbing to his charms during his final visit. Her judgement, however, is that his education and upbringing had been flawed with 'too early an independence and his consequent habits of idleness, dissipation, and luxury' had served to make him 'cold-hearted and selfish' (p. 308).

If Marianne represents the dangers to which an attachment to the principles of sensibility may lead, Elinor rather demonstrates the importance of restraint and reflection. Elinor is aware of the dangers of excessive emotion and the improprieties it might lead to in a society where women who transgress norms of behaviour, however hypocritical, can be ruined. Hers is the central role, not least because much of the reader's understanding of the events of the novels comes mediated by her perspective. Elinor, in contrast to Marianne, possesses 'a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment'. She is not emotionless but is possessed of an 'excellent heart', and her 'feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them' (p. 8). Elinor values the order and support of social conventions and knows the importance of abiding by them. Unlike her sister, she

understands the necessity of ‘telling lies when politeness required it’ (p. 118). For much of the novel (a period of four months) Elinor experiences the same inner turmoil as Marianne because the man she loves is bound to another, a deceitful and devious woman, Lucy Steele, who takes delight in psychologically torturing her with details of their engagement in the full knowledge of her feelings. The contrast between her silent suffering and Marianne’s indulgence is marked. The strength of Elinor’s emotions is shown in the key scene in which she breaks down and confesses her secret grief to her sister: ‘Her narration was clear and simple; and though it could not be given without emotion, it was not accompanied by violent agitation, nor impetuous grief. – *That* belonged to the hearer, for Marianne listened with horror, and cried excessively’ (pp. 244–5).

The novel closes with the double marriage of Elinor and Edward and Marianne and Colonel Brandon, the man she had previously rejected as too old and too dull for her. Many readers find the romance between Marianne and Brandon hard to swallow, and the humiliation of Marianne a little hard to take: ‘She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims’ (p. 352). The strength of Marianne’s humbling may reflect the very real dangers that Austen perceives sensibility might incur, a fashion which is not simply the silly affectation of a seventeen-year-old girl but a philosophy, which, for many, challenged the very basis of British government and society in a revolutionary decade. To see Austen’s novel in the context of the times in which it was written is, then, to appreciate its author as a woman seriously engaged with her social and cultural context and to understand that her art conceals a wealth of political significance, accessed by indirection and allusion rather than overt commitment and enthusiasms. *Sense and Sensibility* is clearly a novel fully connected to the times which formed its author’s mind.

Lord Byron, *The Giaour* (1813)

The most notable exponent of the Oriental tale in the Romantic period was Lord Byron, a major practitioner of the form of the Romantic verse narrative. Byron’s ‘Turkish Tales’ were extremely popular. They described exotic lands and featured glowering and tormented Byronic heroes and the glamorous objects of their loves. It was a winning formula, irresistible because of the persona of the poet who penned them and the readers’ knowledge that he had travelled in the lands he described. In 1809–11, Byron had undertaken a tour of the Eastern Mediterranean, visiting Greece and the Ottoman (Turkish) capital of Constantinople. As well as witnessing sublime natural scenery, he also encountered mosques, palaces, towers, coffee houses, slave markets and bazaars. The territory though which he travelled was then part of the declining but still powerful Ottoman Empire. In British liberal circles there was a strong sympathy for the plight of the Greek nation with its past glories, a sympathy shared by Byron who later lost his life in its struggle for national independence in 1824. The territory was a much-contested one; it marked the boundary between European Christendom and Islam. The first of Byron’s Eastern Tales, *The Giaour* (Byron [A]), has been variously interpreted as a poem about the clash of world-views between Muslim and Christian and their struggle over the contested territory of Greece.

The Giaour is narrated not in a simple linear narrative but through a series of disjointed fragments told from differing points of view, although these points of view may be unified if the poem is seen as analogous to the performance of coffee-house storyteller, as Byron indicated it might. It tells the tale of the flight of the Giaour, or 'Infidel', from the court of a Turkish despot, Hassan. The Giaour has had an adulterous affair with a slave of Hassan's harem, a beautiful woman called Leila. Hassan has Leila sewn into a sack and drowned, a traditional Turkish punishment for infidelity and one that Byron claimed to have witnessed and prevented during his travels. The Giaour takes his revenge by ambushing and killing Hassan, but he gains no peace from this act, suffering anguish and torment afterwards. Retreating to a monastery, he remains an alienated and isolated figure haunted by visions of Hassan's severed hand, and unable to accept absolution of his guilt, despite the actions of the concerned and kindly friar.

Like Byron's other Turkish Tales, *The Giaour* exploits the taste for exotic landscape and local colour. Details of the mosques, religious festivals ('the Bairam's feasts begun') and culturally specific language ('high *jerreed*', 'silversheaved ataghan', 'the jewel of Giamschid') (ll. 229, 251, 355, 479) are present to heighten the authenticity of the tale. This is a land of fakirs and dervishes, harems and festivals, where people appeal to Allah and to genies; all these details place the reader in an unfamiliar world, one where the poet is our guide. Byron's extensive notes to the poem serve to reinforce his authority as someone who has travelled and studied in the area. The Greek islands, 'Edens of the eastern wave' (l.15), where the poem is set, are presented as a place of past glory rather than of present importance: (ll. 103–7). Quickly Byron establishes the tale within a temporal frame in which modern Greece is degraded in favour of a classical past; a privileging of the Hellenic and neo-classical emphasising a Eurocentric notion of civilisation deriving from ancient Greece. The tale is framed by the hostility between the differing religions, epitomised in the poem's title. When the Muslim fisherman who narrates a part of the poem witnesses the Giaour for the first time he expresses his vision in terms of visceral hatred and disgust: 'I know thee not, I loathe thy race' (ll. 191, 198–9). The young Venetian, with 'his Christian crest and haughty mien' (l. 256) is clearly identified by his religious and ethnic status. It is easy to read the poem in terms of the Orientalist stereotyping which Edward Said accused the West of indulging. Hassan is presented as a typical Oriental despot presiding with jealous pride over his harem (l. 439); he is a local chieftain who is violent, proud and vindictive, demonstrating an eastern excess of passion, often viewed as the preserve of the inhabitants of this feminised East. Betrayed, as he sees it, by his slave, Leila, he has little compunction in carrying out the terrible punishment according to his laws and customs: an event that is obliquely represented in lines 352–87 of the poem. This event is put in the context of an alleged Islamic misogyny which believes 'that woman is but dust, / A soulless toy for tyrant's lust' (ll. 487–90). Byron's note to these lines informs us that the belief that women have no souls is a 'vulgar error' and a misreading of the Koran but, nevertheless, one he claims is held by many Muslims of his time. Leila is seen as a 'faithless slave' but the worst aspect of her crime for Hassan's people is that she deserts him for a 'a Giaour' (l. 535). Hassan's fury and violence is seen as a trait of his religion,

... as true an Osmanlie
As e'er at Mecca bent the knee;

As ever scorn'd forbidden wine,
Or pray'd with face towards the shrine ...
Who falls in battle 'gainst a Giaour,
Is worthiest an immortal bower

(ll. 729–32, 745–6)

In contrast to Hassan, the Giaour plays a chivalric role, and though he fails to rescue Leila, he exacts a murderous vengeance for the crime. He is also conflicted and flawed. Unlike Hassan, he is not a participant in any extensive social network. After his death the loss of Hassan is deeply and poignantly mourned by his mother; he receives an honourable funeral and the community of which he was the head subsequently disintegrates: 'For Courtesy and Pity died / With Hassan on the mountain side' (ll. 288–351). The Giaour is from the start an alienated and solitary Byronic figure. He is pictured with an 'evil eye', and resembling 'a demon of the night', tortured by his memories of the death of Leila and his killing of Hassan, his mind brooding over these 'guilty woes ... like the Scorpion girt by fire' (ll. 196, 422–3). The Giaour's own Christian faith is problematic: for the Muslim fisherman, he is doubly damned as an 'Apostate from his own vile faith' (l. 616). The second half of the poem from line 787 onwards is taken up with the Giaour's retirement to a monastery and his subsequent inner torment. Haunted by mental visitations of Leila and Hassan's severed hand, he finds no peace in the comforts of conventional religion. To the monks he is an outcast and pariah figure, 'some stray renegade, / Repentant of the change he made' (l. 812; 802–7). The Giaour's moral frame of reference is unstable. He actually believes the Friar will absolve him from the deed of murder because the man he killed was hostile to Christianity (ll. 1038–9). More than this, he effaces any moral superiority he may have over Hassan by making himself hypothetically as guilty as the Turk:

Yet did he but what I had done
Had she been false to more than one;
Faithless to him – he gave the blow,
But true to me – I laid him low.

(ll. 1062–5)

The Giaour is certainly a hybrid or mixed character, one who is capable of culturally cross-dressing and ambushing Hassan's party 'in Arnaut garb' (l. 615). He is alienated from both Christendom and Islam, caught somewhere in between the two in the 'contact zone' of the Levant. Whether the Giaour's ability to pass in both cultures reflects a cosmopolitan ideal or is simply an aspect of a homogenising Orientalist impulse is a key question. The ability to culturally cross-dress is not always a liberating thing. It is something the Western imagination usually reserves for Europeans who may impersonate the culture of the other with some skill, yet also, at the same time, despise the other (the explorer Richard Burton was able to dress and speak as an Arab and undertake the Hajh, or pilgrimage to Mecca, and at the same time maintain his strong sense of ethnic superiority). That this skill is seldom, if ever, vouchsafed to those of the other cultures, privileges a Eurocentric perspective.

The triangular relationship between the Giaour, Hassan and Leila is highly significant for those who see the poem in post-colonial terms. At the heart of the poem is a struggle between two men for a woman. In some ways Leila is simply an absent counter in this

struggle, opening the poem to readings in which the homosocial and the homoerotic predominate. The Giaour is certainly as much obsessed by his hatred for Hassan as his love for Leila, ‘The maid I love – the man I hate’ (l. 1018). Certainly the Levant was for Byron a place where he could more easily indulge in the homosexual liaisons which were an important facet of his complicated sexual identity. It was also a place where, in his Eastern tragedy about an effeminate ruler *Sardanapalus* and the Turkish cantos of *Don Juan*, he could explore role reversals and cross-gender and cultural identities.

The role of the silent and absent Leila in the poem is fascinating. Leila is a slave in Hassan’s harem; the harem being a place of imagined sexual pleasures and tyrannies which obsessed European travellers and readers. She is ‘Circassia’s daughter’ (l. 505), originating from the Crimea, a place reputed by travellers and natural historians in the period to be the source of the most beautiful of the human races; the prize acquisitions of the harem. Leila is imaged as the ‘Kashmeer butterfly’, a ‘lovely toy so fiercely sought’, the passive victim chased and destroyed, ‘with wounded wing, or bleeding breast’ (ll. 388–421). Certainly she is accorded no voice or real presence in the poem. Post-colonial critic Gayatri Spivak has famously characterised British representations of the Indian Hindu rite of Sati prior to its formal abolition in 1829, as ‘white men ... saving brown women from brown men’ (Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, p. 271 [Ciii]). She argues that the voice of the woman is lost in this debate between men. Others have seen Leila as a synecdoche for the contested Greek nation, both of which are imaged as beautiful corpses in the poem. While this does make schematic sense, the racial origins of Leila as European rather than Eastern, creates ambiguity. While Orientalist and post-colonial critics see the poem as involved in the stereotyping of Eastern cultures necessary to establish a Western sense of superiority and political dominance, others can point to the ambiguities, contradictions and paradoxes in this rather bleak fable where East and West collide and which provides no obviously normative standpoint from which to judge the actors in its tragedy.

4.19 ‘A Turkish Female Slave’ by John Cam Hobhouse who accompanied Byron on his tour of Greece and the Levant in 1811. This illustration of a Turkish female slave from his published account of his travels gives some impression of how Hassan’s Leila may have looked.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818; revised 1831)

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was first published anonymously in 1818 and revised for its third edition in 1831. Shelley added an important ‘Introduction’ which influenced the reader in how to read her story, as well as a number of significant textual changes. This reading uses the 1831 edition as text (Shelley, *Frankenstein* [A]). The novel clearly belongs to the Gothic genre of writing, although it has certain key features of its own. It eschews the medievalism of Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* and Lewis’s *Monk* for a nearly contemporary setting in the 1790s, and is concerned with recent developments in scientific thought, as well as contemporary exploration and discovery. *Frankenstein* is not concerned with the supernatural but with the future possibilities of current ideas, so much so that many claim it as an early work of science fiction. It is also a novel which

contains sensational events and excessive emotion; on its first publication it was assumed by many that the author must be male. *Frankenstein* avoids much of the cliché of Gothic writing, dealing with serious issues, such as education, environment, crime and responsibility. Contemporary reviewers identified the novel as belonging to the school of Godwin (to whom it was dedicated), and it shows many similarities with William Godwin's adaptation of Gothic as a novel of ideas. Godwin was Mary Shelley's father and Mary Wollstonecraft was her mother. She was the product of these two notable revolutionary thinkers. She had an unconventional education, brought up by her father on Wollstonecraft's programme of a rational female education. In 1814, she met the unconventional young poet Percy Shelley who was estranged from his wife, and by whom she then had two children (both of whom died soon after birth). Percy and Mary were married in 1816 following the suicide of Percy's first wife. It was during the couple's visit to Byron's rented Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva in 1816 that the ideas for the novel took shape after those present agreed to try their hand at each writing a tale of terror.

Frankenstein has an unusual narrative structure, in that the novel is composed of several embedded narratives (rather like concentric circles) and we have no omniscient narrator to provide an obvious scheme of moral values against which to judge the extraordinary events of the novel; hence the reader is left in a place of moral uncertainty, and has to exercise her or his own judgement. Most encounter the novel in modern texts based on the 1831 Standard Novels edition (though the 1818 text is increasingly popular) and begin reading with the author's 'Introduction'. This was written some twelve years after the composition of the novel and eight years since Percy Shelley's tragic drowning. Shelley was earning a living from her writing as well as trying not to alienate her very conservative and hostile father-in-law, Sir Timothy Shelley. Her 'Introduction', as many have pointed out, contains several inaccuracies or misrememberings. She claims that her main intentions in writing the novel were to 'speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror', and to 'curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart' (pp. 7–8), deflecting the reader from some of the more serious questionings of the anonymously published 1818 text. She places the novel in a very clear moral framework, describing 'the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together', mocking 'the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world' (p. 9). Readers, at the outset, should be wary of Shelley's attempt to provide a later and conventionally moral framework in which to read the novel as being about a man 'playing God', an interpretation far more suited to the various stage and cinematic adaptations than the original text.

4.20 Frontispiece and title page to the English Standard Novels edition of *Frankenstein* (1831). The representation of the Creature on the left of the page is the only one authorised by Mary Shelley in her own lifetime.

The reader next encounters the reprint of the 1818 'Preface' written anonymously by Percy Shelley. He, conversely, places the novel in the context of contemporary natural philosophy. He claims that the novel is not 'merely weaving supernatural terrors' and is exempt from 'the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment' (pp. 11), identifying its chief purpose as not the condemnation of a man playing God, but 'the

exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affections, and the excellence of human virtue' (p. 12). This would seem to imply that Victor Frankenstein's crimes, if such they are, are committed against society and family, rather than God, and that human virtue, however twisted by social forms, is, as the Godwinian reformers would have it, 'universal'. The reader next encounters the outermost framing narrative of the story. Captain Robert Walton writes four letters to his sister, Margaret Walton Saville (who shares the same initials as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley), concerning his departure from the family circle to undertake a voyage of exploration to the North Pole, in the double quest for the 'wondrous powers which attract the needle' (p. 15) and the passage across the top of the globe to the Pacific Ocean. Walton feels isolated and alienated, desiring the 'company of a man who would sympathise with me' (p. 19). In his fourth letter, Walton describes his imprisonment by the ice and the sighting of two figures, the second of which is the dying Victor Frankenstein engaged in a self-destructive pursuit of the being he has created and animated.

The first ten chapters of the novel proper are Victor's first-person account of his childhood, education and the creation of the monstrous being he now pursues. The next six chapters contain Victor's account of his Creature's narrative, which tells of its abandonment and the adventures it has experienced since its 'birth'. The Creature claims to have been born benevolent and sympathetic, but has become violent, criminal and aggressive as a result of his treatment by society (rather as Rousseau claimed for humanity as a whole). The Creature describes how, in a fit of rage, he murdered Victor's brother, the child William, and pleads with Victor to create a mate for him. The following seven chapters return the reader to Frankenstein's main narrative telling how he fails in this promise to create a female mate, of the Creature's revengeful murder of his wife Elizabeth on their wedding night, and the subsequent pursuit to the Arctic. The novel closes with Walton's account of Victor's death, the remorse of the Creature and his desire to journey to the Pole to destroy himself on a funeral pyre. When the ice does break Walton abandons his quest and returns home to his sister and the comforts of domesticity. It is important to realise that all the narrators in the text (and there are other embedded narratives like those of the De Lacey family and of Elizabeth Lavenza to consider) are seeking to persuade their auditors to act in a certain way (and thus the reader to judge them in a certain way). There is no omniscient narrator to judge the actions of the characters or corroborate the truth of what they say; only the perspective of other characters whose own moral judgments may be suspect or biased.

Frankenstein as a novel is completely up to date with regard to its treatment of scientific discovery, anachronistically so for its setting in the 1790s. Captain Robert Walton presents himself as a natural philosopher and explorer, a man inspired by travel narratives to investigate the secrets of the North Magnetic Pole and search for a passage through the Arctic Ocean. He accepts the then current hypothesis (to our notions absurd) of an open and temperate sea at the pole:

I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight ... the sun is for ever visible, its broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual splendour ... sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land

surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe.

(pp. 15)

The most obvious predecessor of Walton's voyage is that of Constantine Phipps, who commanded an expedition of the Royal Navy to sail to the North Pole in 1773; it also pre-empted the major polar exploratory activity of John Franklin (the man who famously ate his boots in 1819, and, equally notoriously, whose men ate each other when lost in the Canadian Arctic during the expedition of 1845), William Edward Parry, and the later activities of Sir John Ross and his nephew James Clark Ross. Walton is undertaking 'a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole', presumably hoping to sail directly across it. Only by 'undertaking such a journey', he tells his sister, 'can the secret of the magnet' be attained (p. 16). It is quite possible that Walton is seeking to locate the magnetic North Pole as well as the geographic Pole, and so discover the causes of magnetic variation and dip which puzzled mariners and scientists for generations.

Similarly Victor's experiments are equally current. Luigi Galvani had coined the term *animal electricity* to describe whatever it was that activated the muscles of his frogs when he passed a current through their legs. Along with contemporaries, Galvani regarded their activation as being generated by an electrical fluid that is carried to the muscles by the nerves. Galvani's nephew, Giovanni Aldini, popularised his discoveries in a series of sensational lectures in London (from 1802) in which he applied electric currents from the Voltaic pile to recently slaughtered animals, and, most spectacularly, to the corpse of a newly executed criminal, who showed terrifying signs of renewed vitality. Discoveries and speculations such as these led to a very public debate between two prominent surgeons, which became known as the 'Vitalist Debate'. The more orthodox faction in this debate argued that life was the product of some extra essential force or spiritual substance applied to the body rather as Jehovah communicates the spark of life into Adam's fingertip in the panel on Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Others argued, in a more materialist mode, that life is a product of the assemblage of the parts of the organism, a property of its material organisation. These positions were politicised, with the Vitalist party identified with the traditions of a Christian British science and their opponents with a materialist French science. In 1814 the debate developed in Great Britain into a heated controversy between two of the country's leading surgeons, John Abernethy and his former pupil William Lawrence. Abernethy argued that some form of substance similar to electricity was needed to explain vitality. Lawrence, on the other hand, identified life with the functional interdependence of the organised body itself. Lawrence was Percy Shelley's personal physician and the Shelley circle were well aware of these debates. This context has led scholars such as Marilyn Butler to argue that Victor Frankenstein is a parody of the Abernethy position, infusing life into his creature, in a parody of the Christian God ('Introduction' to Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, xv–xxxiii [A]).

The novel also raises social and political questions about the reality of crime and guilt. Rousseau had claimed that all humans were born free, virtuous and benevolent but were corrupted by society. Mary Shelley's father's treatise *Political Justice* (1793) famously argued that crime was the result of a flawed environment and education rather than the

consequence of any original sin or capacity to depravity. Godwin argued that one might as well blame the knife as the murderer. Generally, this was the argument of the French revolutionaries in their attempt to reform government and society through democracy (and many critics argue that the Creature is a metaphor for the violent actions of the revolutionary masses). The Creature tells us how he was naturally sociable, greeting his creator with a smile before the latter flees from him in horror, appalled by his physical ugliness. Subsequently, the Creature seeks acceptance; aware that his physique is monstrous, he hides himself away and secretly helps a poor family, the De Lacey. Although befriended by the blind father, who cannot see his ugliness, he is driven away by the son, who regards him with fear and horror. Seeking to adopt an unprejudiced child as his friend, he is enraged to murder when the child, who calls him an 'Ogre', reveals that he also is a member of Frankenstein's family. The Creature claims that he is 'malicious' only because he is 'miserable' and that 'if any being felt emotions of benevolence' for him he would 'return them an hundred and an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake' and 'make peace with the whole kind!' (p. 148). At the centre of the novel is the worst crime society can imagine, the murder of a child; nevertheless, the reader may maintain a sympathy for the Creature and attach the blame and responsibility to his creator and society at large. The extent to which individuals are responsible for the crimes they commit against society is raised by Creature's actions. This issue, for the Shelley circle, had a wider application in the understanding of political violence by the masses during the French Revolution.

If the Creature's actions do not derive from any intrinsic evil, what then is Frankenstein's error? He certainly fails to take responsibility for his creation. After infusing life into the Creature during a period when he is undergoing extreme mental stress, he collapses and when awakened by his creation which grins and reaches out to him, he flees and abandons it. Victor is a damaged being; he shuns his family, friends and fiancée and is the indirect cause of all their deaths. He is obsessed by the drive to discover the secrets of life itself. Some have argued that Victor's obsession results from the early death of his mother and the trauma occasioned by it; when he falls asleep on the night of the creation he dreams of meeting Elizabeth in the streets of Ingolstadt and kissing her, only for her to metamorphose into the corpse of his dead mother complete with Gothic 'grave-worms crawling' in the folds of her shroud (pp. 58–9). This seems to indicate that his giving life to his creation will lead to Elizabeth's demise. It also argues for a pronounced Oedipal obsession with maternity and death. Similarly, his absence from the marital chamber on his wedding night is occasioned by what may be a wilful misreading of the Creature's threat to be with him at that time. Freudian critics have influentially argued that the Creature may be considered as Victor's dark self, carrying out those murderous desires he harbours in his own subconscious.

If Victor commits a crime then it is that of being a negligent parent in abandoning his 'child'. More than this, critics such as Anne Mellor have influentially argued that *Frankenstein* is a feminist text in which male science, in the person of Victor, usurps the female role of giving birth. What Frankenstein does is thus unnatural. Science or natural philosophy is defined in the text as a masculine activity. Waldman, Victor's tutor, tells him how the modern masters of science 'penetrate into the recesses of nature, and show how she works in her hiding-places. They ascend into the heavens: they have discovered

how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe' (p. 49). The image Waldman uses is one of a female nature penetrated or raped by a male science. Similarly, Victor tells how in 'his secret toil' among 'the unhallowed damp of the grave' he 'pursued nature to her hiding places'. He 'tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay'. He collects materials for his new being from 'the dissecting room and the slaughter house' (p. 55), which would argue that his Creature is not fully human but a hybrid of human and animal parts. The context of the novel would certainly argue that what Victor does is unnatural and a crime against nature, rather than a crime against God. If we read the text this way, we locate it more firmly in the free-thinking and radical circle of minds and ideas amid which it was created.

Reference

A Primary texts and anthologies of primary sources

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995.

Blake, William. *Blake: The Complete Poems*. 2nd edn. Ed. W. H. Stevenson, Harlow: Longman, 1989.

Bromwich, David. *Romantic Critical Essays*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.
Introduction to the Romantic period through selections from prose writings with an excellent general introduction.

Butler, Marilyn, ed. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Cambridge University Press, 1984. A selection of key documents written during the revolutionary and war years.

Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text. Oxford University Press, 1994.

Byron, George Gordon, Lord. *The Giaour* (1813). In *Byron, The Oxford Authors*. Ed. Jerome J. McGann. Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 207–46.

Clare, John. *Major Works*. Ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell. Oxford University Press, 2004.

The Early Poems of John Clare, 1804–1822. Vol. II. Ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Cox, Jeffrey, N., and Michael Gamer, eds. *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama*. Peterborough; Ontario: Broadview, 2003. Selection of key dramas of the period by male and female writers.

Darwin, Erasmus. *The Botanic Garden, a Poem. In Two Parts. Part I. Containing the Economy of Vegetation; Part II. The Loves of the Plants*. 2 vols. 4th edn. London: J. Johnson, 1799

Fairer, Davis, and Christine Gerrard, eds. *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. Has an excellent selection of key pre-Romantic poets with substantial headnotes.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Vol. II. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. 8th edn: New York and London: Norton, 2006.

Richardson, Alan, ed. *Three Oriental Tales*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Excellent introduction to the Oriental tale.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* (1818; rev. 1831). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Ed. Sylvana Tomaselli. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Wordsworth, William. *The Excursion*. Vol. V of the *poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Helen Darbishire. Oxford University Press: 1949: 1972.

Wu, Duncan, ed. *Romanticism: An Anthology*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Contains lengthy headnotes on biographical and critical approaches to each author.

Women Romantic Poets: An Anthology. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. Contains important works by women poets of the period.

B Introductions and overviews

Bloom, Harold. *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1973. Visionary study of the 'Big Six' Romantic poets.

Butler, Marilyn. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries 1760–1830*. Oxford University Press, 1981. Crucial overview of the period by leading historicist scholar of Romanticism.

Curran, Stuart, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. Outstanding collection of contextual essays about the period.

Ford, Boris, ed. *The Romantic Age in Britain*. The Cambridge Cultural History. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Well-illustrated and wide-ranging collection of essays on all aspects of the period's culture.

Gaull, Marilyn. *English Romanticism: The Human Context*. New York and London: Norton, 1988. Highly detailed and scholarly study of the intellectual context of the period.

Jarvis, Robin. *The Romantic Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1789–1830*. Harlow: Longman, 2004. Excellent introduction to the various contexts of Romantic-period writing. Good starting point.

- Kelly, Gary. *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789–1830*. Harlow: Longman, 1989. Sound introduction to the Romantic and Gothic novel.
- Kitson, Peter J., ed. *Coleridge, Keats and Shelley*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990. Collection of essays illustrating major theoretical approaches to Romanticism.
- McCalman, Iain, ed. *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776–1832*. Oxford University Press, 1999. Essential reference work.
- Roe, Nicholas, ed. *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Excellent collection of essays on contexts and readings of individual works.
- Stabler, Jane. *Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790–1830*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002. Extremely useful introduction to both male and female writers during the period, organised by genre.
- Watson, J. R. *English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789–1830*. 2nd edn. London: Longman, 1992. Sound traditional study of the canonical poets, no coverage of female writers.
- Wu, Duncan, ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. Critical essays (1980–95) dealing with Romanticism.
- A Companion to Romanticism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. A collection of over fifty short essays on the subject. Useful starting place.

C Further reading

Books contained in the section are usually written for an informed audience and are more advanced than introductory writing. Useful journals in the area include *Studies in Romanticism*, *Romanticism*, *The Wordsworth Circle*, *European Romantic Review*, *The Byron Journal*, the *Keats–Shelley Journal*. *Romanticism on the Net* is an electronic journal available at www.ron.umontreal.ca/.

i Romanticism and general

- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford University Press, 1987. Key work about domestic sphere essential for Austen.
- Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Norton, 1953. The standard and scholarly account of Romantic ideas and aesthetics.
- Barrell, John. *English Literature in History 1730–80: An Equal Wide Survey*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1983. Study of the politics and aesthetics of landscape.
- Chandler, James. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. University of Chicago Press, 1998. Major study arguing that Romantic writers were themselves historicists.

Cox, Jeffrey. *In the Shadows of Romance: Romantic Tragic Drama in England, Germany and France*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987. Good introduction to Romantic drama.

Curran, Stuart. *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*. Oxford University Press, 1986. Key study of the ways Romantic writers adapted traditional forms.

Levinson, Marjorie. *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*. Cambridge University Press, 1986. Concentrates on Wordsworth but contains major new historicist readings of the poems.

Liu, Alan. *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*. Stanford University Press, 1989. Substantial and unified study of major Romantic poet from new historicist perspective.

McGann, Jerome J. *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. University of Chicago Press, 1983. Polemical study arguing that Romantic critics have uncritically absorbed the ideas of the canonical Romantic poets.

O'Neill, Michael. *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Rich and complex readings of the canonical Romantics.

Richardson, Alan. *A Mental Theatre: Poetic Drama and Consciousness in the Romantic Age*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988. Excellent study of Romantic drama and especially useful on Byron's poetic dramas.

Roe, Nicholas. *The Politics of Nature: William Wordsworth and Some Contemporaries*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002. Authoritative and scholarly account of the political context for Wordsworth and his contemporaries.

Siskin, Clifford. *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830*. Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Reassessment of the role of print culture on the relationship between Romanticism and modernity.

Watkins, Daniel P. *A Materialist Critique of English Romantic Drama*. University Press of Florida, 1993. Political reading of the key Romantic dramas.

Wolfson, Susan. *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism*. Stanford University Press, 1997. Concentrates on the Big Six poets and combines new historicist and formalist approaches.

ii Political and economic context

Chase, Malcolm. *'The People's Farm': English Radical Agrarianism 1775–1840*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. Study of enclosure and radical ideas.

Christie, Ian. *War and Revolution: Britain, 1760–1815*. London: Edward Arnold, 1982. Key background study

- Daunton, M. J. *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700–1850*. Oxford University Press, 1995. Sound historical overview.
- Deane, Seamus. *The French Revolution and the Enlightenment in England, 1789–1832*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988. Key study of political and intellectual context.
- Emsley, Clive. *British Society and the French Wars, 1793–1815*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979. An invaluable source book for all aspects of the war.
- Dickinson, H. T. *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1780–1815*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985. Key study of radical ideas.
- Derry, John W. *Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool: Continuity and Transformation*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990. Excellent brief introduction to the political history of the period.
- McCalman, Iain. *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Ground-breaking historical study concentrating on subversive writers and figures. Profoundly influential on historical readings of Romanticism.
- Neeson, J. H. *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure, and Social Change in England, 1700–1820*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. Sound study of enclosure.
- Payne, Christina. *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England, 1780–1890*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993. Key and informative study.
- Smith, Olivia. *The Politics of Language 1791–1819*. Oxford University Press, 1984. Key study of the language of political discourse in the period.
- Snell, K. D. M. *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660–1900*. Cambridge University Press, 1985. Standard account.
- Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. 2nd edn. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968. Classic study of working-class consciousness, history and culture.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973. Influential study of the representations of urban and rural experience.
- Worrall, David. *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance, 1790–1820*. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992. Important study of radicalism, especially agrarian ideas.
- iii Colonialism, Orientalism and empire*
- Aravamudan, Srinivas. *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency 1688–1804*. Durham, NH, and London: Duke University Press, 1999. Heavily theoretical and advanced but important in widening the scope of the Romantic representations of colonial others.

- Barrell, John. *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991. Bravura and ground-breaking study of the Romantic anxieties about the East.
- Bayly, C. A. *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830*. London: Longman, 1989. Excellent overview from global perspective.
- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992. Essential reading about ideas of Britain and the nation in the period.
- Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2002. Stresses the weaknesses and anxieties of British colonialism.
- Fulford, Tim, and Peter J. Kitson, eds. *Romanticism and Colonialism*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. Important collection of essays, an essential starting point.
- Travels, Explorations and Empires, 1770–1835*. 8 vols. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001–2. Essential collection of primary sources with introductions and annotations.
- Irwin, Robert. *The Lust for Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*. London: Allen Lane, 2006. Anti-Said and an excellent survey of the field and the current debate.
- Leask, Nigel. *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Essential study of representations of the East in Romantic writing.
- Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770–1840*. Oxford University Press, 2002. Major study of Romantic-period travel writing.
- MacKenzie, John M. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester University Press, 1995. Argues against Said, detailed and authoritative.
- Makdisi, Saree. *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Romantic writing as complicit with modernity and empire.
- Marshall, P. J., and Glyndwr Williams. *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment*. London: Dent, 1992. Classic scholarly account.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Study of racial attitudes in the period.
- Richardson, Alan, and Sonia Hofkosh, eds. *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture, 1780–1834*. Stanford University Press, 1996. Key collection of essays on the subject.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Romantic novelists and empire.

Orientalism. London: Pantheon Books, 1978. Key and influential polemical account of the subject.

Sardar, Ziauddin. *Orientalism*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999. Polemical and committed but good introduction to subject.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.

Wilson, Kathleen, ed. *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660–1840*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. Important collection of new essays.

iv Black writers and the transatlantic slave trade

Carretta, Vincent. *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005. Authoritative biography of the most important black writer of the period.

Coleman, Deirdre. *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. Fascinating examination of the links between anti-slavery and colonialism.

Ferguson, Moira. *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery 1670–1834*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. Key text in establishing this subject.

Hochschild, Adam. *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*. London and New York: Macmillan, 2005. Attractively written account of anti-slavery.

Kitson, Peter J., and Debbie Lee, eds. *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*. 8 vols. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999. Essential collections of primary texts and documents.

Lee, Debbie. *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. Fascinating reading of Romantic poetry and slavery.

Thomas, Helen. *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. Good overview of the subject.

Wood, Marcus. *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002. Challenging readings with chapters on Romantic poetry and Romantic writers.

Wood, Marcus, ed. *The Poetry of Slavery: An Anglo-American Anthology*. Oxford University Press, 2003. Essential anthology of texts.

v Visual art, landscape and aesthetics

- Andrews, Malcolm. *The Search for the Picturesque: The Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800*. Stanford University Press, 1990. Standard account.
- Barrell, John. *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting*. Cambridge University Press, 1980. Important study.
- Bermingham, Ann. *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740–1846*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. Key work on the picturesque.
- Copley, Stephen, and Peter Garside, eds. *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770*. Cambridge University Press, 1994. Important collection of essays on the picturesque.
- Donald, Diana. *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III*. London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Duckworth, Alastair. *The Improvement of the Estate*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. Important study of landscaped gardens, especially good on Austen.
- Eaves, Morris. *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy: Art and Industry in the Age of Blake*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992. Important reading of the material processes of producing art.
- Fulford, Tim. *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. Important and accessible study of categories of landscape.
- Hipple, W. J. *The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory*. Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1957. Major study.
- Janowitz, Anne. *England's Ruins: Poetry and the National Landscape*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. Important study of Romantic-period aesthetics and communitarian ideas.
- Myron, Martin, Christopher Frayling and Marina Warner. *Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination*. London: Tate Publishing, 2006. Catalogue of Gothic art.
- Paulson, Ronald. *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983. Illustrated study of how the French Revolution furnished representations for the visual and literary arts.
- Vaughan, William. *Romanticism and Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1994. Good general introduction.

- Bewell, Alan. *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Fascinating study of medical theories from the Romantic period.
- Cunningham, A., and N. Jardine, eds. *Romanticism and the Sciences*. Cambridge University Press, 1990. Important collection of essays.
- Fulford, Tim, Debbie Lee and Peter J. Kitson. *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. Accessible and important study of the inter-relationships between science, exploration and politics.
- Gascoigne, John. *Science in the Service of Empire; Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. Important discussion of Banks as central figure in scientific culture of his time.
- Golinski, Jan. *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760–1820*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Classic study of Priestley, Davy and electrochemistry.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla. *Nature Displayed: Gender, Science and Medicine, 1760–1820*. London: Longman, 1999. Key essays on gender and medicine.
- Knight, David. *The Age of Science: The Scientific World-View of the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Levere, Trevor. *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Early Nineteenth-Century Science*. Cambridge University Press, 1981. Major study of Romantic science.
- Richardson, Alan. *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. Important study of Romantic theories of the mind.
- Ruston, Sharon. *Shelley and Vitality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005. Useful for the debate about vitalism.
- Uglow, Jenny. *The Lunar Men: The Friends Who Made the Future, 1730–1810*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. Eminently readable and scholarly account of Priestley, Darwin and the Lunar Society of Birmingham.

vii Religion

- Canuel, Mark. *Religion, Toleration and British Writing, 1790–1830*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Argues that Romantic writers were in favour of toleration in religion.
- Hempton, David. *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of the Empire*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. Good overview.

Hole, Robert. *Pulpit, Politics and the Public Order in England, 1760–1832*. Cambridge University Press, 1989. Important work about Church and dissent.

Priestman, Martin. *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Freethought, 1780–1830*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. Important study of freethinkers.

Ryan, Robert. *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789–1824*. Cambridge University Press, 1997. Sees Romanticism as a religious and Protestant movement.

Ward, W. R. *Religion and Society in England 1790–1850*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1972. Sound general overview of the subject.

viii Sensibility

Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Culture of Sensibility; Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. University of Chicago Press, 1992. Detailed and authoritative account of the movement and its relationship to consumerism.

Jones, Chris. *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Excellent discussion of the radicalisation of sensibility in the 1790s.

McGann, Jerome J. *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Sees poetry of sensibility as alternative tradition to conservative, male-dominated Romanticism.

Kowalski-Wallace, Elisabeth. *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century*. Columbia University Press, 1997. Linking of sensibility to consumption, important study.

Pinch, Adela. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*. Stanford University Press, 1996. Stresses continuities between sensibility and Romanticism.

Todd, Janet. *Sensibility: An Introduction*. London: Methuen, 1986. Excellent starting point for studying the movement.

ix The Gothic

Botting, Fred. *The Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Excellent starting point for study.

Clery, E. J. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762–1800*. Cambridge University Press, 1995. Supernatural linked to new technologies and consumerism.

Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley. Tavistock Northcote, 2000. Useful starting point for female Gothic.

- Ellis, Kate Ferguson. *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1989. Influential feminist study of female Gothic writing.
- Gamer, Michael. *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. Historicist account of Gothic as underside of Romanticism.
- Hoeveler, Diane Long. *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalisation of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*. Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, 1998. Argues that female Gothic novelists helped define femininity for women of the British middle class.
- Hogle, Jerrold, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Excellent essays.
- Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. Readable and accessible study argues that Gothic was a form of social critique.
- Miles, Robert. *Gothic Writing 1750–1820: A Genealogy*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Foucauldian reading identifies Gothic as ‘discourse’ before the novel.
- Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. London: Women’s Press, 1976. Early and influential account of the female Gothic.
- Punter, David. *A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- The Literature of Terror. Volume 1: The Gothic Tradition. Volume 2: The Modern Gothic*. London and New York: Longman, 1996. Reworking of an original study which founded the Gothic as a serious object of critical study.
- Williams, Anne. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. Important discussion of key Gothic issues, especially male and female Gothic.
- x Literary marketplace*
- Altick, R. D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900*. University of Chicago Press, 1957. Classic study.
- Klancher, Jon. P. *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832*. Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. Influential discussion of periodical literature.
- McGann, Jerome J. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton University Press, 1991. McGann applies a socialised model of literary production to Romantic writing.

- Newlyn, Lucy. *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. Relates major Romantics to the growth of the reading public and the rise of criticism.
- Raven, James. *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750–1800*. Oxford University Press, 1992. Study of popular presses in the period.
- St Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. Recent authoritative study will become standard work on the subject.
- Twyman, Michael. *The British Library Guide to Printing: History and Techniques*. London: British Library, 1998. Succinct guide to changing printing technologies.
- xi Women poets and gender*
- Curran, Stuart. 'The I Altered', in Mellor, ed., *Romanticism and Feminism*, pp. 185–207.
- Favret, Mary A., and Nicola J. Watson, eds. *At the Limits of Romanticism: Essays in Cultural, Feminist, and Materialist Criticism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994. Good collection of revisionary feminist essays.
- Fay, Elizabeth. *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. Useful introductory account.
- Feldman, Paula R., and Theresa M. Kelley, eds. *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995. Good collection of revisionary feminist criticism.
- Landes, Joan B. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1988. Important study.
- Mellor, Anne K., ed. *Romanticism and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988. Key collection introducing the study of Romantic women writers.
- Mellor, Anne K. *Romanticism and Gender*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Challenging attempt to discriminate between two gendered forms of Romanticism. Essential reading.
- Ross, Marlon. *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Woman's Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 1989. Seminal work on Romantic women writers.
- Wilson, Carol Shiner, and Joel Haefner, eds. *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776–1837*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994. Important collection of revisionary essays on this subject.