

# ROMANTICISM IN NATIONAL CONTEXT

*Edited by*

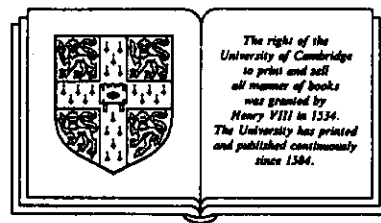
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- 13 Gwyn Williams, 'Gweledigaeth J. M. W. Turner, 1775-1851', *Barn*, 148 (1975); Morgan and Burke, *passim*.
- 14 J. P. Larsen, *Haydn*, New Grove Series (London, 1982), worklist by Georg Feder, p. 195; Morgan, p. 126.
- 15 Osian Ellis in the essay in *Transactions*, and Morgan, pp. 129-32.
- 16 On Karadžić, D. Wilson, *The Life and Times of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić* (Oxford, 1970); summary in Burke, p. 13.
- 17 For the social analysis which follows, see my *When Was Wales?*, ch. 7.
- 18 Geraint H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales 1660-1730* (Cardiff, 1978); a seminal study.
- 19 A mass of secondary material is analysed, from different points of view, in Morgan and my *When Was Wales?*
- 20 Saunders Lewis, *Williams Pantycelyn* (London, 1927); Glyn Tegai Hughes, *Williams Pantycelyn* (Cardiff, 1983); A. M. Allchin, *Ann Griffiths* (Cardiff, 1976).
- 21 Vivid picture in R. T. Jenkins, *Hanes Cymru yn y Ddeunawfed Ganrif* and *Hanes Cymru yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg* (Cardiff, 1928 and 1933, with reprints; a history of Wales in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries).
- 22 The best summary account of this intellectual movement is Morgan, esp. ch. 3.
- 23 R. T. Jenkins and Helen T. Ramage, *A History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and of the Gwyneddigion and Cymreigyddion Societies* (London, 1951); I write on the Gwyneddigion in 'Druids and democrats: organic intellectuals and the first Welsh nation', in my *The Welsh in Their History* (London, 1982) and in *Madoc*, ch. 6.
- 24 Glenda Carr, *William Owen Pughe* (Cardiff, 1983), a fascinating study, in Welsh.
- 25 On Iolo, G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg*; Prys Morgan, *Iolo Morganwg*, and my *Madoc*.
- 26 Burke, pp. 17-18.
- 27 On Dr John Dee in this context, my 'Welsh Wizard and British Empire: Dr John Dee and a Welsh identity', in *The Welsh in Their History*. On Dee in general, the many volumes of the late Dame Frances Yates, especially her *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London, 1979) and P. J. French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London, 1972).
- 28 Morgan, chs. 4 and 5.
- 29 My *The Merthyr Rising* (London, 1978), and 'Locating a Welsh working class: the frontier years', in *The Welsh in Their History*: I am engaged in an analysis of *Udgon Cymru*.
- 30 My 'Dic Penderyn: myth, martyr and memory in the Welsh working class', in *The Welsh in Their History*.

## 2

*Romanticism in England*

MARILYN BUTLER

English Romanticism is impossible to define with historical precision because the term itself is historically unsound. It is now applied to English writers of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, who did not think of themselves as Romantics. Instead they divided themselves by literary precept and by ideology into several distinct groups, dubbed by their opponents 'Lakeists', 'Cockneys', 'Satanists', Scotsmen. It was the middle of the nineteenth century before they were gathered into one band as the English Romantics, and the present tendency of textbooks to insist upon the resemblance to one another of (especially) six major poets — Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats — dates only from about 1940.<sup>1</sup>

With the partial exception of Coleridge, English creative writers were not in close touch with the German literary men who *did* call themselves Romantics at this time, nor was any German counter-revolutionary writing, whether poetry, philosophy, theology or literary criticism, much studied in England between 1800 and 1824. (Far more popular through translation in the 1790s were the pre-revolutionary writers, the Sturm und Drang dramatists including Schiller and the young Goethe, ballad-mongers like Bürger, and writers of Gothic fiction; while translation from German began again with Carlyle's generation from the mid-1820s.) Yet English poetry written in the generation before and especially after 1800 has usually been thought of as entering upon a golden age, remarkable not only for its innovativeness, seriousness and, at its best, profundity, but for being read by the general public. And, whatever its awkward resistance to preconceived description, much of the English poetry and prose fiction of the period has after all distinguishing preoccupations which connect it with other European cultures and events, including its concern with class, social change, natural religion, regional and national pride, and world revolution.

The need to distance the English writers from their label arises because

the term Romantic comes supplied with its own bibliography and history. It originated in a series of texts which emerged in Jena and Berlin, from 1797. It grew quickly in Germany over the next three decades, and only relatively slowly and intermittently in other European cultures. Like all intellectual artefacts, this theory has the preoccupations and the partisan interests of its time and place. For example, it opposes Romanticism to French materialism, identifying it instead with religious revival, idealism, aspiration, introversion and with literary techniques embodying a religious view of the world, such as myth and symbol. That this is an unhelpful angle from which to approach the English poetic output of the period can be illustrated from the case of Shelley. A poet interested in philosophy, working in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when German Romantic philosophy was in full flower, Shelley associated it with counter-revolutionary thinking, and only very belatedly began to learn German, primarily in order to read Goethe. He has been described by his more modern admirers as an idealist and a mythmaker, but contemporaries knew him as a freethinker and a materialist. His theories were shaped not by the post-Kantians but by Hume, Rousseau, Gibbon, Holbach, the French Revolutionary ideologues, and by the latter's English sympathisers, Erasmus Darwin and William Godwin. Shelley has more in common with Enlightenment thinkers, and indeed with Karl Marx, than with the thinkers we normally deem the European Romantics. This does not mean that poetry in England does not cross-refer to European poetry, but it does mean that a Romanticism defined in terms of German thinking of the time should not be allowed unexamined privileges as a tool of analysis.

Let us take, for example, the frequent use of the appearance of Friedrich Schlegel's Romantic manifesto in 1797 as an approximate starting-point. This date, or its convenient nearby English points of reference – Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789) or Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) – is far too late to begin tracing the significant points of innovation in English literature. Its lateness is indeed itself interested – it implies, of course, that a fresh start had to be made after French classicism and materialism had brought Europe to revolution and the Terror. Rather than treating ideas, especially books advocating new ideas, as though they were necessarily key historical events, we might do better to enquire more dispassionately into the general range of books of literary interest in circulation, and into the material circumstances that shaped their content and style, or even enabled them to appear when they did. If late eighteenth-century English poets and indeed novelists seem original and surprisingly numerous, it may be because they were in a new situation; but the world of books, publishers and writers had already changed before 1750. The revolutionary factor

was the new audience for imaginative literature. More English people were literate, and they were wealthier than before, giving them the means to own books and the leisure to read them. More books were published, and they were better distributed, and better publicised, usually through being reviewed in journals; through improved roads, they reached out into the provinces, where most of the population still lived. The eighteenth-century reader was likely to be 'of the middling sort', what would later be called bourgeois: provincial rather than metropolitan; at least as likely to be female as male.

English 'Romanticism', or whatever term we prefer for the era's cultural revolution, has to be dated from about 1740, when the new readership was felt to have emerged, to somewhere in the mid-1820s, when the conditions of publication underwent a further change. By lowering the price of books from 1825, publishers greatly enlarged the readership once more, and thus produced the conditions for Victorian middle-class literature. Within those dates, literature displays consistent characteristics, or rather it evolves through a number of phases which are sometimes antithetical rather than akin. The notional readership addressed will be literate but not perhaps well-educated: there is more emphasis on feeling and on life-experience (or a hunger for it) than on prior knowledge gained from reading. The great majority of new readers were necessarily excluded from direct political power, which remained in the hands of an oligarchy in the capital. Apparently the new poetry and fiction was less political than the court poetry of earlier periods, which circulated among a smaller elite; but latently the eighteenth-century mode had a political content, for it tended to oppose the central British state and its institutions. This underlying civic preoccupation was one of the features of English Romanticism which was most excitingly new.

The common impression in England of the politics of Romanticism has derived from English poetry, and is quite different from the German impression derived from German criticism and creative writing. The British, from the late eighteenth century on, have tended to associate the poetry we now call Romantic with social change and even revolution. This is because the English poems thought most typical visibly appeal to a democratised audience, either in taking up themes favourable to the lower orders or hostile to the powerful; or in employing diction, metres and (as we shall see) symbols with popular connotations. Blake's *Songs* and *The Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge retain their populism and accessibility even in the twentieth century. They are in this sense modern, but it is not a sense which embraces the literary term modernist, for modernist art was not populist and accessible.

Some of the most influential and eloquent twentieth-century admirers of

these poets have found some common sources, for example a hostile reaction to modern urban life, and thus some common features, in Romantic art and modernist art. Since the middle of the twentieth century, especially in America, English Romantic poetry has been more and more seen as grouped around one great autobiographical statement, Wordsworth's long blank-verse poem *The Prelude* (1850) and the most influential criticism of *The Prelude*, for example that of Geoffrey Hartman, has played up its self-referentiality, while playing down its dealings with men, with nature and with God.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, *fin de siècle* nineteenth-century critics claimed that their aestheticism, self-absorption and social alienation was the essence of Romanticism. As we shall see, these generalisations can be sustained only by concentrating on a small proportion of even the best and most innovative English writing of the period. What they really reveal is the interesting affinity some groups of later intellectuals have felt for the manner, the self-description and the ideology of that first group of critics to style themselves Romantics, or for post-Kantianism more generally. Many later commentators on Romanticism have taken up the subject for the reason Schlegel did, to write a manifesto for the writer's autonomy, most immediately for the critic's own. Criticism of Romanticism has frequently been rhetorically more Romantic, and certainly more partial, than English Romantic writing itself: most notably, in the claim that it entails a step in the arts that is new and irreversible. That is why this survey of the period in England centres on the issue of whether innovation and Romanticism were the same thing.

In several West European literatures, certainly the English and German, the impulse to innovation in the arts preceded the French Revolution. The literal, political revolution was thus not the agent of cultural change, and post-revolutionary Romanticism must be recognised as at most a secondary phase within a series of innovations. Alternatively we can extend the scope of the term, and conclude that it was an early, civic form of Romanticism that had priority in England, and was itself a factor in creating the post-revolutionary mood of introspection that for some moderns is the Romanticism. According to their adoption of public themes, English poets of the period fall into three groups. The first expresses a challenge from the still disenfranchised middle and provincial classes in the half-century before the French Revolution: it includes Blake and the early Wordsworth and Coleridge. The second, from the mid-1790s to about 1815 (the years when Britain was at war with post-revolutionary France), continues to use similar provincial landscapes and an accessible 'natural' tone, but drastically revises the oppositional message in favour of a religiously orthodox, politically loyal one. This phase includes the mature work of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The third, from about 1812 to 1824, is much

less distinctively provincial and democratic; indeed, the poetic modes of Byron and Shelley are as aristocratic as their social origins, though this does not prevent them from challenging the policies of the British government more boldly and directly than their predecessors. The purpose of this summary of all three phases is to explore their reactivity – to other texts, to war, dearth and unrest, to images of citizenship, of nationhood and of power. It will be followed by a conclusion dealing largely with the transitional 1820s, which considers whether the arrival of common or solipsistic Romanticism was not postponed, in England as in France, until that decade.

### THE COUNTRY MOVEMENT

The word 'country' in English puns on two quite different, even incompatible concepts: the countryside, a part or even a negation insofar as it is undeveloped, not-town; and the nation, which implies the whole rather than the part. Eighteenth-century poets beginning with James Thomson (1700–48), and going on through Thomas Gray (1716–71) to William Blake (1757–1827) and William Wordsworth (1775–1850), replace the 'court' or London or aristocratic discourse of Dryden, Pope, Swift and Gay with a symbolic language exalting provincialism. By keeping in view the term country in both its possible senses, they express, and further shape, attitudes which are representative of the attitudes of some of the gentry and much of the 'middling orders', especially of the commercial and entrepreneurial classes in eighteenth-century London and the provinces.

The term in use at the time for the sentiments I am describing, and for those who upheld them, was 'patriot'.<sup>3</sup> Both the sentiment and the word patriot as a descriptive term for it go back into the seventeenth century, especially the civil war period, when two of its strands were already visible: (1) a coherent sense of nationhood, and (2) a tendency to cite 'the nation' in selective contexts, e.g. when a Stuart monarch's right to levy taxes was being challenged. In other words, 'patriot' was often used in opposition to 'Crown' and the centralised bureaucracy at Westminster. Though early in the eighteenth century a Tory aristocrat such as Bolingbroke would deploy the term, as in his essay *The Idea of a Patriot King* (1740), it became much more commonly associated with liberal or radical thinking. This is why the Tory Dr Johnson opined that 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.' Patriot writing generally sounded chauvinistic, expansive and aggressive: France and Spain, Britain's chief trading rivals, were the favourite enemies, and the government was much criticised for its reluctance to go to war with them.

The eighteenth-century English patriot liked war, but not war against

Americans, whom he regarded as sturdy British provincials like himself. Though he had advocated war against old-regime France, war against the new France was another matter. The French Revolutionary wars which began on the 1st of February 1793 embarrassed and divided English radicals, and enabled the government's supporters to capture the old patriot rhetoric for national purposes. It is because of this war that creative writers, like other middle-class people, tended to move just before 1800 from an oppositional patriotism to a more modern form of nationalism that now looks decidedly conservative.

Creative literature, like the graphic arts, gives to attitudes an emotive, symbolic imagery, an iconography that works on opinion at a level deeper than slogans and far more universal than argument. Through literature 'country' becomes an image to inspire emotion, idealism and loyalty, and an eighteenth-century reality, not a term read about in books by Cicero, Machiavelli or Harrington. It is poets like James Thomson, Thomas Gray and Oliver Goldsmith who make the actual physical countryside both beautiful and familiar, and the same poets who give the country a quite new historical past, going back, importantly, into pre-history. Until this period poets had tended to write as though the metropolitan centres, the courts, the worlds of learning held all the keys to written historical records, and thus all the claims to legitimacy. Named heroes, precursors of kings, conquerors, founders of royal houses, were also conventionally the makers of nations. Mid-eighteenth-century poets became interested in a more generalised and remote people's history, and thus history like the similarly revised terms 'country' and 'nature' acquires an oppositional potential and an appropriate set of symbols.

James Thomson, a new man in London literary society when he arrived from Scotland in 1725, quickly made his name, and enlarged the meaning of 'country', with a long poem that remained a classic for a century, *The Seasons* (1725–30). The whole point of the seasons viewed as a natural phenomenon is that everyone experiences them; in the most fashionable poetry of that decade by Pope, Swift and Gay, individual Londoners, courtiers, writers, aldermen, bawdy-house keepers are listed by name, and the unfashionable reader is thus largely excluded from equal participation in the poem's code. Thomson's attitudes in the 1720s were not so much anti-aristocratic as sympathetic to middling and common people. The benignity of his best-known poem made it an accessible middlebrow classic, which could be recruited by relative liberals of the French Revolutionary period, like the Earl of Buchan and William Wordsworth, and was still thought to have a populist message in the 1830s and 1840s. By 1740 Thomson had thrown in his lot with the political opposition (though in the 1730s this still entailed patronage by aristocrats), and his

last poem, *The Castle of Indolence* (1746), speaks eloquently to a middle-class provincial readership. It is an imitation of *The Faerie Queene* of the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser, who was now interpreted as an ultra-Protestant patriot. The first canto allegorically represents Robert Walpole's oppressive, sybaritic, aristocratic England, and the second imagines its replacement by a busy, modern commercial community, located in north-west England, the region where many of the new industries were. Nature isn't empty for Thomson, as it becomes for Wordsworth and other nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers. His 'country' is well-populated, productive and even technological.

Moreover, as a Scotsman himself, Thomson in all his later work tends to equate the nation's past with the story of all its peoples, which means going back beyond the arrival of the English to the cultures of the aboriginal Scots and Welsh. It is Thomson, in *The Castle of Indolence*, in his long blank-verse poem *Liberty* (1735) and in his patriot masque *Alfred* (1740), who introduces the symbolic figure of the Druid, as both the archetypal poet and the archivist of collective popular wisdom. And Druids, or their secular successors the bards, afterwards walk the pages of much early Romantic British poetry.

The next substantial poet after Thomson was Thomas Gray, a Cambridge academic and cultural historian whose *magnum opus* was to have been a history of British poetry. [Gray] traced a continuous literary tradition back not (as was and still is customary) through the Normans to Provençal and Latin literature, but to the Welsh and the Norse. He defined British poetry as poetry written by the people of the British Isles, an all-inclusive and de-centrist conception of literary history. The work was never written, though the notebooks survive.<sup>4</sup> Gray did on the other hand publish some of his translations from Norse and Welsh, and his two most celebrated original poems were perceived in the eighteenth century to belong to the patriot tradition.<sup>5</sup> One was the 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard', in which Gray compares the blameless, forgotten lives of the poor who are buried in the churchyard with the pompous memorials and destructive careers of the rich. The other was 'The Bard', in which the last of the thirteenth-century Welsh bards defies the invading English king, Edward I, before plunging to his death from a Snowdonian crag. 'The Bard' remains an important work in Romantic poetry, because it puts in its most memorable form the series of connections English poets henceforth made. Historical Welsh resistance to London legitimises not armed rebellion, of course – no one could be more blamelessly pacific than Gray – but the rights of provincial men to civic esteem and some access to power.

The two most brilliant and imaginative mid-century poets, certainly the two who used history most creatively, are seldom now studied as serious

writers. The simple reason for this is that their enemies, whose motives were often more political than literary, succeeded in pinning on them the charge of forgery. Read literally, Macpherson and Chatterton certainly were forgers, but their partisans urged that they should be read imaginatively, and posterity has lost the key to the most exciting strand of mid-eighteenth-century poetry by not following this advice.

James Macpherson (1736–96) grew up a Highlander in a Jacobite region of Scotland, and was ten when Bonnie Prince Charlie's rebellion was crushed at Culloden, a few miles from his home. The Scottish culture he encountered as a university student at Aberdeen, and later as a schoolmaster and minor poet, was not in rebellion against Scotland's political union with England of 1707. But articulate university men did resent the centralising of power and professional opportunities in London, the cultural snobbery of the English and the national insult to Scotland administered in 1756, whereby, during a new war with France, the pro-Hanoverian Scottish gentry were not permitted to arm. Encouraged by well-known Edinburgh professors like Adam Ferguson and Hugh Blair, Macpherson 'discovered' two Gaelic epics, *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1763). By this 'find', he demonstrated the heroic and warlike character of Scotsmen, along with the legitimacy of their claim to the soil, and the age of their culture. The symbolic point was at once seized upon, for example, by enthusiastic Scottish patriots like Blair, and by incensed defenders of orthodoxy in London. James Boswell, a Scotsman in heated rebellion against an Edinburgh culture he associated with his enlightened, Whiggish, lawyer father, quickly identified Macpherson's subversive aims. He described him to Samuel Johnson, who soon became Macpherson's arch-enemy, as 'an impudent fellow from Scotland, who affected to be a savage, and railed at all established systems'.<sup>6</sup>

But it was precisely Macpherson's elemental reduction of provincial patriotism to cultural and historical first principles that made him re-usable elsewhere. Just as he became an inspiration to provincial and iconoclastic British poets in the next half-century so, perhaps more importantly, he became a force in revolutionary America and successively in different parts of Europe. His translation was retranslated into Italian (1763) and thereafter into German, French, Spanish, Danish, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Czech and Polish. Macpherson made a very large contribution to the great upsurge of purchases of English books recorded in Germany in the early 1770s and again in the late 1780s and early 1790s.<sup>7</sup> Part of the appeal of English was that it was not French; the more resentfully French cultural hegemony was felt, the more popular another 'northern' literature was likely to be. But the source of Macpherson's charm was more specific

than this. He was himself an articulate cultural nationalist on behalf of a small nation.

Fingal, a third-century Scottish tribal chief, goes to help defend his Gaelic kinsmen in Ireland, first in *Fingal* from an invasion of Norsemen, afterwards in *Temora* against the treachery of a southern Irish tribe. These plots support a series of contrasts between one people and another, and the notes and introductory material develop them further. The reader is prompted to read the poem comparatively and analytically, to see it as a model heroic poem, an expectation Macpherson satisfies with his brilliantly simplified settings and situations, and his use of a vocabulary, rhythm and imagery which appear to be literally rendered from ancient originals. Ultimately it is not the individual characters who hold the attention, Fingal and his son, the bard Ossian, but their people, who have been submerged by political destiny but never fully assimilated by their powerful neighbours. Eighteenth-century historians already tended to idealise the people of northern Europe for their symbolic resistances to southern empires – ancient Rome, and its successor, the Catholic Church. Macpherson's band of brothers, whose idealised society has no courtiers, no priests, no hierarchy of church or state, implicitly made a case on behalf of any marginalised group; not specifically against London, but equally well against Bourbon or Napoleonic France, Austria or Russia.

Macpherson's immediate notoriety in England is partly a tribute to the effectiveness as a spokesman for orthodoxy of Samuel Johnson (1709–84). Though a provincial himself, Johnson sturdily upheld mainstream metropolitan culture, its Latin roots and its link with the Church of England. The problem with nineteenth- and twentieth-century textbook accounts is that they exaggerate Johnson's typicality, and underplay the extent to which his values were contested by other able writers in his lifetime. The most drastic opposition offered to Johnson's London-centred literary values came from the Bristol poet who killed himself before his eighteenth birthday, Thomas Chatterton (1752–70), the author of an entire corpus of allegedly fifteenth-century poetry and prose. These manuscripts all appeared to have been written in and around Bristol, or to have Bristol connections. Significantly, a handful emanated from Wales or the Isle of Man, and were supposedly contemporaneous translations from the respective Celtic languages; others dated from about 1100, and related details about the Bristol region before the Norman Conquest. In this way Chatterton associates culture and the true civic spirit with everywhere that is not London, for Londoners, he insinuates, have been half-foreign and pro-foreign in all periods.

It is for the comprehensiveness of his civic claims, not merely on account

of the pathos of his early death, that Chatterton remains a hero to three succeeding generations of poets, notably to Blake, Wordsworth, Keats and Browning. Chatterton no less than Macpherson had a clear theoretical understanding of the spirit of an incipient nationalism that would apply everywhere, not merely in the British provinces. Shortly before his death, he wrote three brilliant 'African Eclogues', the first of which, 'Heccar and Gaira', describes a tropical Eden, simple, sensuous and primary. The idyll of two lovers in interrupted by the arrival of European slavers, who carry off the woman, Cawma; it is both a personal and a tribal or national rape. In the last of the eclogues, 'The Death of Nicou', Chatterton brilliantly imagines a 'national' religion, similar in structure and incident to the Hebraic. It includes a war in heaven and a fall, implying that these are universal myths, not peculiar to Hebraism. Again, however, the vividly colourful detail also particularises the world of the poem, along with its religion, as specifically African. Chatterton writes here as a sympathiser with cultural autonomy worldwide. Bristol was a slavetrading port: by moving his ground and his angle of vision to Africa, Chatterton suddenly represents his own whiteskinned people and their religious traditions as ugly and alien. This is a transference of the goals of provincial patriotism to another people which has parallels in the humanitarian literature of the late eighteenth century, and as we shall see recurs impressively in the early nineteenth century too, but nowhere with more respect for the otherness of the east and south than in Chatterton.

Macpherson and Chatterton were unorthodox members of a network of scholars engaged in the distinct history of peoples, and thus with characteristic localised traditions in poetry, in historiography, in religion and in language. It is a form of historicism we now associate more readily with Herder's Germany in the 1770s, but from the mid-1730s to the 1770s the cultural history of heroic-age societies such as Homer's Greece, republican Rome and Gaelic Scotland was a leading preoccupation of Scottish academics such as Thomas Blackwell (1701–57), Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) and Hugh Blair (1718–1800). By the era of the American Revolution, 1775–82, Scottish academic and professional opinion was more reconciled with the *status quo* and the many opportunities it offered to well-educated young Scotsmen in London and in the expanding possessions overseas. Even if the well-orchestrated English campaign against Macpherson as a forger had not done much to discredit Gaelic-based cultural nationalism, the Scottish professoriate now had more to gain from identifying with mainstream English interests, including the central literary tradition.

Even before the French Revolution, Scots professors like Blair, who (seventy years before the first English university) offered university-level

courses in literature, were presiding over the formation of a more limited, confined, academicised and gentrified concept of Literature as, in a fairly full sense, a discipline. Blair was the first professor in Britain of 'belles lettres' or polite letters (1762), and his lectures, published in two volumes on his retirement in 1783, show that he taught the subject synoptically as a continuous world tradition incorporating the European (but not the Asiatic) ancients, and modern texts written in standard southern English rather than in regional dialects. At the same time the new sub-field of aesthetics was emerging, strengthened by Scottish medicine's empirical work in psychology. As for a literary syllabus, the poetry in English fittest for study was reissued in a convenient form by two Scottish anthologists who, as the latest editor of the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* has observed, have had a surprisingly strong influence on modern conceptions of what eighteenth-century English poetry is like.<sup>8</sup> Anderson and Chalmers, making their selections in the post-revolutionary years of 1795 and 1810, confined themselves to dead authors whose collected works had been published, which meant that they also chose men and not women, the established and not the occasional – those who found favour with publishers and with received opinion, both in the public and in the rapidly defining profession of letters.

By the same process of literary natural selection, certain late eighteenth-century notions of literature and literary history have had a better chance of survival than others. The views of the Johnson circle in London and of the Scottish professoriate have received ample attention in the late twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Less visible now, but through journals a more familiar component of the literary scene at the time, were the 'popular antiquarians' who, by exchanging ideas, discoveries, manuscripts and books, between them opened up the field of folk or people's history and culture. Thomas Gray's network, involving the Wartons, Thomas Percy, Horace Walpole, Richard Hurd, is well-remembered; another of Gray's correspondents, the Welshman Evan Evans, who found a genuine sixth-century long heroic poem, the *Gododdin*, has had less notice. Equally, Percy's collection of ballads, *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), now outshines the collections made in the 1780s and 1790s by the tough and relatively rigorous Northumbrian, Joseph Ritson, who was not only more scrupulous in his editorial procedures, but far more accurate than Percy in locating the origins of ballads in an oral tradition emanating from the illiterate masses.<sup>10</sup>

Especially between 1760 and 1800, studies of popular language burgeoned. Dictionaries of English slang and provincialisms appeared to challenge Johnson's great dictionary of the *written* English language (1755).<sup>11</sup> Revisionist grammarians, who in the middle of the century were

generally Dissenters addressing middle-class readers, but in the 1790s were sometimes radicals speaking for the half-lettered, challenged a tradition in writing English which insisted upon 'correctness' and upon a knowledge of Latin, for, in effect, such rules ensured that written discourse was controlled by the expensively educated.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile the two greatest literary geniuses of the 'mainstream' tradition, Shakespeare and Milton, were reclaimed for the popular side. The Shakespearean scholars Francis Douce and George Steevens interpreted the comedies and histories, especially, as a product of Elizabethan popular culture, and the influence of this type of work is plainly seen in the paintings and engravings done in the 1790s for Boydell's exhibition-room in London, the Shakespeare Gallery.<sup>13</sup> In 1790 a similar project was begun for Milton, who as the 'great republican', a participator in England's own revolution, was an even more apt subject for canonisation in the stirring new times. Fuseli and Blake worked together on illustrations to Milton, and for Blake this meant a doubly significant apprenticeship, to a continental-trained, Michel-angelesque painter and to the most exalted of English poets. But then it is hard to exaggerate the central significance of Milton, the outspoken prophet-poet and religious iconoclast, as a prototype for every major English poet who passed through a liberal phase during the Romantic period.

Of all British poets, it is William Blake, the working-class engraver, never normally thought of as typical, who straddles the radical ideological chasm of the 1790s, and manages even after that date to develop populist insights. Blake's juvenilia uses the standard pastoral and historical emblems of patriotism. In his poetry and prose of the 1770s and 1780s he imitates Spenser, Shakespeare and Macpherson, and he writes a patriot historical drama of a type familiar since Thomson's day, *Edward III*. Blake's first mature illuminated book, the *Songs of Innocence* (1789), idealises both the simplicity of the child and the simplicity of the pastoral world, and sets them up in opposition to the corruption of advanced adult society, a world most savagely delineated in the poem 'London' in the complementary series, *Songs of Experience* (1794):

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice: in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

From 1790 on, Blake, a fervent sympathiser with the French Revolution, is engaged in imaginative world histories which are also projections of a revolutionary millennium. He writes a series of 'prophecies', *America* (1793), *Europe* (1794) and, in *The Song of Los* (1795), a Part I called

'Africa' and a Part II called 'Asia'. *America* is another great primitivist epic like Macpherson's *Fingal*, which Blake admired, though it is set in the present, in that wider Atlantic community the patriots were so keen to exalt. *Europe*, an attack on the European super-states, France and Britain, anticipates the work of the next generation of liberal poets, whose pre-occupation with the aristocratic state is the subject of the third section of this essay. The untypical feature of Blake's career is that he never clearly takes the step common to the middle-class poets of his generation, which is to become a nationalist loyal to the war effort against the French. Instead, Blake reverts after 1800 to a familiar type of patriot historicism, unfamiliarly crossed with a religious fundamentalism that has even older popular and radical credentials.

Between 1800 and 1803 Blake conceived the plots of his last two epics, *Milton* (1810) and *Jerusalem* (1820), which each synthesise two strands of popular thought significant among working-class radicals in the 1790s. One is the prophetic strain apparent even in Anglican preaching, but most sensational in the claims of Richard Brothers, ex-naval officer, religious enthusiast, and self-styled Prince of Israel: that the revolutionary wars were millenarian events which would enable the poor and meek to inherit the earth, and Brothers himself to convert the Jews to Christianity. The other is the 'revived' Druid or ancient British religion, as expounded by the Welshman Edward Williams, or Iolo Morganwg.<sup>14</sup> Blake knew of the Welsh nationalists' poetic claims early in the next century, but we do not know when and by what means he came on them. More likely perhaps than the translations by William Owen Pughe and Iolo Morganwg of 1789 and 1792, or than Iolo's own collection of poems of 1794, was Iolo's 'reinstitution' of the Druid ceremony of celebrating the autumn solstice on Primrose Hill in 1792, which was reported in the press. As for the nature of the appeal his work had for Blake, this was likely to have been his advocacy of a universal popular religion uncontaminated by priestcraft, mystification and a church hierarchy, and the role in his system of the bard, as a prophet and leader.

By 1808 Blake had achieved a number of works, both graphic and literary, which are plainly beholden to recent radical Welsh cultural nationalism. In describing his paintings on British mythological subjects (now lost) which he intended to exhibit in the forthcoming exhibition of his work, Blake claims to have studied British history, and he plainly perceives it as heroic in the older patriot style. 'Adam was a Druid, and Noah . . .'; Arthur's period was a time of 'ancient glory', when Britain was 'the source of learning and inspiration'.<sup>15</sup> The most famous and memorable of all Druidic doctrines, certainly in Iolo's descriptions of them, was the transmigration of souls. As a political activist and a revolutionary sympathiser



at this time, Iolo plainly discerned the potential for a modern leader of the popular will to believe that a dead hero may return. He hints at his own bardic identity with previous bards, great spirits and benefactors of mankind, who had 'again assume[d] the earthly state, to restore the knowledge of truth'. Above all, Iolo invokes the memory of the sixth-century poet Taliesin, whose poetry speaks of the previous transmigrations his soul has passed through, ascending to heaven and returning to earth.<sup>16</sup>

The conception of a Taliesin who has witnessed the creation and is also magically identical with his Bardic son Iolo comes remarkably close to the central action of *Milton*. In Blake's poem the dead poet, the republican John Milton, benevolently chooses after a hundred years to re-enter the earthly life, in order to bring prophetic truths gathered in eternity down to his own people. He does this through the new inventions of Blake, the author of the present poem; he enters or merges with Blake. Similarly, Blake's *Jerusalem* reflects the Welsh nationalists' claims to cultural seniority – or, rather, it exaggerates them greatly. In Blake's poem the British are symbolised by the male Albion, the Jews by his female emanation, Jerusalem. One meaning of their eventual reconciliation is plainly the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, the Jewish religious tradition being more corrupt than the British. Chapter 2 opens with Plate 27, an address 'To the Jews' in which Blake insists on British primacy:

Was Britain the primitive seat of the patriarchal religion? . . . It is true and cannot be controverted . . . Your ancestors derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem and Noah, who were druids . . . Albion was the power of the druids.

In the last stages of writing *Milton*, and while still in the middle of *Jerusalem*, Blake seems to have come upon a much more conservative interpretation of Druidism as itself a degenerate 'state religion'.<sup>17</sup> Possibly under the influence of this more orthodox view, Blake in his epics as published no longer seems to boast of the purity of the native British inspirational tradition, as he certainly does in the passages quoted above. Yet in their fervour and their moments of pristine simplicity, especially when they fall into hymn-like metres, the two epics still evoke the older type of patriotism:

The fields from Islington to Marybone,  
To Primrose Hill and Saint Johns Wood:  
Were builded over with pillars of gold,  
And there Jerusalem's pillars stood.<sup>18</sup>

Blake's introductory verses in *Milton*, confusingly well-known in modern times in Parry's setting as 'Jerusalem', sing of a millennium in which Jerusalem will be rebuilt 'in England's green and pleasant land'.

Modern patriotic conservatives have adopted the song as their own, but Blake around 1810 came nowhere near making a respectable upholder of the national effort. His *Jerusalem* celebrates Albion the Giant Man, the archetypal Briton, and it names the places, from London suburbs to Welsh mountains, where ordinary people live. But the poem as a whole still rejects the institutional aspect of Britain-in-history – the court, the law, and the state religion – which in Blake's idiom became 'stony laws' and 'serpent temples'. And it is wholly in line with the older, oppositional conception of patriotism to suggest, as Blake does, that the line back to earliest wisdom has been in the keeping of marginal, despised, half-visible elements in the present population, its Celtic fringe and its Bible-based antinomian sects.

#### PATRIOTS INTO NATIONALISTS

Though it is common to think of Romanticism as an artistic expression of the French Revolution, this cannot be correct in any simple sense if, as the previous section argued, a symbolic language of liberty, equality and popular nationhood had been evolving in England over the previous half-century. The political effect of the French Revolution was to provoke counter-revolution in England, at least in the propertied classes, and thus to scale down and muffle the rhetoric of liberty and nationhood in a literate pursuit like poetry. Concepts such as Nature and national history had to be divested of much of their recently acquired meaning, or they would remain oppositional and socially divisive. One of the commoner responses to the political crisis of 1790–1800 was to make both concepts more detailed, literal and particularised, so that their uncomfortable associations with the populace were lost.

George Crabbe (1754–1832) represents nature in a way that becomes characteristic of the nineteenth century. Even his early poems of the 1780s, such as *The Village* (1784), stand out for their unprecedented fidelity to a single locale, the bleak eastern seacoast around his native Aldeburgh in Suffolk. Crabbe himself represents the innovation as a change from the highbrow and idyllic literary pastoral of Virgil and Theocritus to an accurate imitation of the grim, prosy realities of modern life:

. . . Cast by Fortune on a frowning coast,  
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast . . .  
By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,  
As Truth will paint it and as Bards will not.

(1.49–54)

Like so many eighteenth-century poets after the first quarter of the century, Crabbe was himself an isolated provincial from humble stock, the

son of the village exciseman. It is in fact now common to regard him as an eighteenth-century poet, old-fashioned in his day and left behind by Romanticism. But, as the word 'bard' hints, Crabbe is also rejecting a much newer kind of poetry which idealised the countryside in terms different from those of the classical pastoral. His flat marshlands, peopled with struggling, sinning individuals, also question the countryside of Gray in 'The Elegy in a Country Churchyard' (1751) and of Oliver Goldsmith in 'The Deserted Village' (1770), since in both these famous and representative eighteenth-century poems the poor villagers appear morally superior to rich town-dwellers, and sympathetic because they are also implicitly the victims of 'the mighty'. It is no accident that Crabbe had already attracted the notice and patronage of the Whig statesman Edmund Burke, who introduced him to the wealthy Duke of Rutland: Crabbe was first chaplain to Rutland, then a parish clergyman in one of the duke's livings for the rest of his life.

From the beginning, Crabbe drops the divisive social message. As he develops his art, that of the verse short story, in collections such as *The Borough* (1810) and *Tales* (1812), his characters become as isolated and individual as his plots. What goes wrong in their lives, and often a lot goes wrong, is no one's fault but their own. The brutalised fisherman Peter Grimes, the comfortable, respectable, snobbish spinster Dinah, are more believable and lifelike than eighteenth-century country-dwellers in literature, but they are not in the same degree 'the people'. Nor do Crabbe's mudflats and weed-choked estuaries evoke 'the country': instead they have been seen plausibly as interiorised landscapes, desolate images for personal alienation, among the earliest of modern poetry's waste lands. In one sense Crabbe is anything but limited in his perspective, for he is a geologist, a student of flora and fauna. Yet, paradoxically, the kind of generalisation which that pre-Victorian interest leads to also has the effect of deflecting, because it dwarfs, the social, humanitarian aim of making this world better.

On nationhood, or history, a similar process of particularisation is carried out by Walter Scott (1771–1832). Just as Crabbe's specific nature counters the country party's generalised nature, so Scott's Scottish history of the last three centuries, conveyed in his long narrative poems, beginning with *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), and in the novels, beginning with *Waverley* (1814), supersedes Macpherson's primitive and nationalist epics. Scott should not be seen as initiating historical poetry or fiction, any more than Crabbe or Wordsworth are the pioneers of nature-poetry. His well-documented studies of relatively recent Scottish history serve the purposes of making his characters and communities familiar and likeable, and of connecting them with English history. By beginning with the English-

Scottish border he draws on stories already familiar to the English reader, since the rivalry of the English Percy and the Scottish Douglas appears in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Part I, and in the famous traditional 'Ballad of Chevy Chase'. Until well after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Scott writes works which preach reconciliation, national solidarity, acceptance of a present-day world which history seems to have created by an inevitable process. In doing so he helps to erase the memory of a version of Scottish history which belongs to the literature of protest.

Again, Edmund Burke is often praised for his great polemical work, *The Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), because he is felt to have initiated the concept of a nation growing through history organically like a tree. It is true that the idea of a process leading to the present is far more important to Burke and to Scott than it is to their patriot predecessors. Yet, viewed against the whole-island and primitivist perspectives of, say, Thomson, Macpherson and Gray, Burke seems to have pared down the vision he found. He has shortened English history to the medieval Plantagenet kings and their successors, and moreover narrowed the social perspective from the past lives of the populace to the heroic deeds of an elite. It is Burke's literary achievement that he preserves the patriot sense of common humanity through the homely detail of his imagery and idiom; but his sense of the familiar and the family fits into a framework of customary law and social hierarchy, an elaborate system-as-it-is. So mixed was Burke's medium that the book at first embarrassed both sides. It was only by the end of the 1790s that the *Reflections* really began to elicit admiration from the type of reader Burke surely aimed for, the middle-of-the-road patriot, and to become a comfortable staging-post for middle-class liberals on the way to conservatism.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) and William Wordsworth (1775–1850), both 'Jacobins' between 1791 and 1795, begin to sound like Burkeans before 1800. Of the two it is Coleridge who resembles Burke in his interest in history. As late as 1804, Coleridge and his former Jacobin friend, the poet Robert Southey (1774–1843), still planned to write a complete history of the literature of the British Isles, including the writings of the Celts and Anglo-Saxons, a project that does not sound very different from Thomas Gray's half a century earlier. When in 1797 Wordsworth and Coleridge divided the subject-areas of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) between them, it was Coleridge who chose to imitate a historical ballad, while Wordsworth adopted the language and concerns of present-day rustics. Coleridge in *The Ancient Mariner* achieves the same shift of perspective that Burke and Scott do. He takes an incident – the mariner's slaying of the albatross – which must have happened in a remote age, barely imaginable, semi-pagan, pre-Reformation, and focuses upon what happened later: not

merely the mariner's personal, spiritual journey through guilt, repentance and atonement, but the transformation of the remembered episode's symbolic significance over centuries, as an entire culture grows in religious understanding.<sup>19</sup> The folk-collectors and ballad-editors of the 1770s and 1780s, notably the Northumbrians John Brand and Joseph Ritson, rejoice when they find traces of paganism in some legend; Coleridge, on the contrary, emphasises the Christianising of his tale, its presumably ancient or gradual modelling to become a tale of redemption. In a later version, in 1817, he even adds a new layer of interpretation, a series of prose glosses in the margin, in the manner of a seventeenth-century Bible. History, a discourse which had so recently been used to challenge legitimacy, becomes an instrument to legitimise a present-day order.

Wordsworth's ballads of peasant life often seem similarly prone to preach acceptance of the current system. Like Crabbe, he tells stories about particular individuals. Many of them are very poor, but Wordsworth drops the type of explanation for their poverty that would have made the poem a social protest. It was fashionable in the 1790s to write poetic laments about beggars who were also victims of the government's policy of war with France, as Robert Southey had done, and Wordsworth himself in his still unpublished 'Salisbury Plain' of 1794. But Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) goes out of his way to insist that his impoverished sufferers are not evidence of the heartlessness of any section of society, still less of a particular policy, such as war. Perhaps the most striking example in the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth's changed views is the beautiful, meditative nature-poem 'Tintern Abbey'. A few years earlier Wordsworth had himself visited the ruins of the abbey, in the Wye valley on the Welsh border, and he also knew William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1792). Gilpin's book, like other contemporary accounts, protests at the intrusion of industry and the presence of homeless vagrants in the ruins and in the surrounding woods, many of them dispossessed by the enclosure and reappropriation of village land. It is a peculiarity of Wordsworth's poem that its meticulous descriptions record the evidence for the displacement of the population: thin lines of smoke rising from the woods come from poor people trying to live as charcoal burners, a cottage 'green to the very door' may well have been abandoned. But Wordsworth on rural suffering, like Coleridge on paganism, prefers now to look elsewhere, at what is socially harmonious and consolatory: in this case, at his affection for his sister, and at the processes of memory that make the landscape a living presence and a moral influence years after he has seen it. For this purpose, it is an aesthetic landscape, empty of people, that apparently serves best; though the Wye valley's power to haunt him for so long may derive from his suppression of its troubling human features.<sup>20</sup>

Many critics now agree that Wordsworth had adopted the conservative line on key political and social questions by 1798. James Chandler illustrates this well by examining a poem of that year on a typical Wordsworthian subject, 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'.<sup>21</sup> Many of Wordsworth's derelicts are met by chance on a lonely country road or in London, but this old man belongs to the neighbourhood, and calls regularly at different houses to beg for money or good. Wordsworth sees him take out what he has been given:

From a bag  
All white with flour, the dole of village dames,  
He drew his scraps and fragments, one by one;  
And scanned them with a fixed and serious look  
Of idle computation. In the sun,  
Upon the second step of that small pile,  
Surrounded by those wild unpeopled hills,  
He sat, and ate his food in solitude:  
And ever, scattered from his palsied hand,  
That, still attempting to prevent the waste,  
Was baffled still, the crumbs in little showers  
Fell on the ground; and the small mountain birds,  
Not venturing yet to peck their destined meal,  
Approached within the length of half his staff.

At the bottom of the human social chain, the beggar in turn nurtures the birds, while he prompts his betters to charity:

The mild necessity of use compels  
To acts of love; and habit does the work  
Of reason.

The social hierarchy contributes naturally to maintain a moral order; all is for the best. But the resonance of the old idea of nature is too strong to be fully deflected and socialised. At the very least, Wordsworth in his language and his imagery goes on sending our conflicting messages. A good example is his prose Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, first added to the volume in 1800, and then amplified in 1802 with a number of phrases that could not have sounded other than democratic in the sensitive war climate. 'What is a Poet? . . . He is a man speaking to men . . . Nor let the necessity of producing immediate pleasure [i.e. submitting to the reader] be considered a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise . . . it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man.' Among his poems, for every humble, accepting Cumberland beggar, there is at least one stranger and less reassuring figure. Wordsworth, or rather his persona the Poet, meets one of the latter on the moors in *Resolution and Independence* (1807). The narrator has been thinking egotistically of his own sophisticated profession and its troubles; oddly, of two poets, dead tragically young, who

also happen to belong to the patriot tradition of Wordsworth's own youth:

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,  
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;  
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy  
Following his plough, along the mountain-side . . .

The sight of an old man, resembling a huge stone, or a sea-beast emerging from a pool, again brings his thoughts back to Chatterton and Robert Burns. The leechgatherer is a Scotsman and, like so many of the unorthodox sages encountered in Wordsworth's poetry, talkative, wise, but barely comprehensible. Some of Wordsworth's best poems, of which this is one, preach not acceptance of what is, but the painful loss of the past. There is a gap between the educated modern practitioner in the written culture, and a half-understood, fading oral wisdom, that of the child or sage or Druid, which temporarily abashes the self-confident modern man:

In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace  
About the weary moors continually  
Wandering about alone and silently.

It is because he could still write the Preface and a poem about a leechgatherer that Wordsworth went on being associated into the second and third decades of the century, especially by some of his more liberal readers, with his old 'levelling Muse'.<sup>22</sup>

#### INTERNATIONALISM AND THE NATIONALISM OF OTHER NATIONS

Two of the best-known poets among the next literary generation are Lord Byron, an impoverished hereditary peer, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, the estranged son of a wealthy baronet. Their rank makes them unusual among English poets, and Byron's contributed importantly to his fame in his own day; but there were general social factors behind the recruitment of fashionable men to poetry. After half a century of expansion, the literary profession had become better defined. By about 1800, biographies of men of letters were one of the staples of much-read journals like the *Gentleman's Magazine*; dictionaries of writers, and encyclopaedic collections of their works, were issued; poets and leading novelists became sought-after guests at smart parties. Thwarted from travelling in Europe to collect artworks because of the 22-year-long war, the upper orders established a new terrain to cultivate, that of highbrow literature. After two generations in which it seems unusually provincial, literature from the middle of the war on looks like a centralised, aristocratic pursuit. There was nothing originally aristocratic about the more important friends and acquaintances of

Byron and Shelley – Mary Shelley, Thomas Love Peacock, Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, Tom Moore. But they worked in London, met in drawing-rooms, and alluded richly to literature in learned languages and to that metropolitan pursuit, politics. Even if the brilliant Regency period was shortlived – the period of the 'younger Romantics' is roughly 1812–22 – it marked the end of the remarkable provincial phase that preceded it.

The real intellectual inspiration for the younger Romantics and for their metropolitan readers lay in the period leading up to the French Revolution, the 1770s and 1780s, when British upper-class culture had been markedly liberal and pro-French. Wealthy aristocrats, who were often enthusiastic buyers of paintings; sculpture and other artefacts, looked to Rome as the current European art-capital, or travelled further afield in the Mediterranean, the Near East, Egypt and Abyssinia. Scholars and scientists corresponded particularly with the French, though theologians and Bible-scholars were in touch with Germany. The prevailing tone of most of this scholarly industry was liberal and secular. Appropriate fields – including classicism, Bible-criticism, the study of the world's religions or myths – served the purposes of critics of the political establishment, in France particularly but also, in more generalised terms, in England. Thus two of the most admired and influential of British intellectuals in the second half of the eighteenth century, the philosopher David Hume and the historian Edward Gibbon, each spent much time in France or Switzerland, and helped to bring the characteristic French qualities of irony and irreligiosity into fashion in Britain. Gibbon's magisterial *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88) established not only the tone of aristocratic intellectualism, but also two of its favourite topics: the injustice, inefficiency and bad government that accompanies an over-extensive empire, and the malign influence of religion in civic life.

Shelley (1792–1822), educated at Eton and (briefly) Oxford, absorbed the Enlightenment scepticism of Hume and Gibbon, made fiery by further reading in French revolutionary ideologues and their British sympathisers. Among the latter, for example, Shelley read the scientist, evolutionist and poet Erasmus Darwin, especially his annotated poem on natural history, *The Botanic Garden* (1791), and the anarchist philosopher William Godwin, whose *Political Justice* (1793) confronted the problem of how to unchain minds already moulded by law, custom and prejudice. Like many other English intellectuals, Shelley also read French 'mythologists', or anti-Christian students of paganism, and he was particularly beholden to Constantin Volney's *Ruins of Empire* (1791), a book translated into English in its year of publication. Volney had travelled in the Middle East in the 1780s, and his three books describing the current societies and ancient cultures he found encouraged French dreams of revolution on a

world scale. The last chapters of *The Ruins* set out a bleak vision of the history of human society: successive empires, all of them similarly structured, ruled by despots with the help of small elites, had kept themselves in power by using religion as a tool of state. Religion had persuaded the masses either that it was their duty to obey, or that another world was more important than this one. Volney's imaginary 'Legislator' appears in his closing chapters as a spokesman for the French Revolution: now, at last, the masses may be released from imposition, once they can be persuaded to un-think their beliefs. Revolutionaries will re-tell the old charmed stories, the myths, in order to expose their falsity, and thus to break the people's mental chains. *Queen Mab* (1813), Shelley's first long poem, is a Volneyan vision-poem in which the Fairy Queen appears to a young girl, lanthe, to re-instruct her in religion from a brutally materialist and atheist point of view.

The longest and most important of Shelley's mature poems also often meet Volneyan goals, including the most ambitious of all, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). Here Shelley merges a plot found in Genesis and *Paradise Lost* with a plot found in Greek mythology and in Aeschylus; for in both myths, God the Father wars with an antagonist. In Shelley's re-telling, Prometheus, the Greek antagonist, becomes identified with Satan; but he is virtuous, and not only do we see him triumphing, we understand the hitherto orthodox, legitimising story from his rebel's vantage-point. Similarly, Shelley's charming mythological poem *The Witch of Atlas* (1820) begins as a pagan myth of creation and ends as a Volneyan satire on a corrupt ancient theocracy, Egypt. *Adonais* (1821) laments Keats's death by re-writing Milton's elegy for a dead youth, *Lycidas*, but in Shelley's version there is no consolatory doctrine of a personal afterlife.

Among the modern 'myths' Shelley revises and exposes are pro-Christian accounts of Eastern religions. Here his leading antagonist was the friend of Wordsworth and Shelley, Robert Southey. By 1801 Southey had given up his youthful Jacobinism, and was declaring his support of the British war effort with a romance epic nominally featuring Mohammedanism, but really exalting monotheism, *Thalaba the Destroyer*. More contentiously political and far more influential was *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), another readable verse romance, this time set in India. The theme, the cruelty and anarchy of Hinduism, supported Southey's serious journalistic campaign to persuade the British public of the need to impose a strong Christian government on India.<sup>23</sup> Southey's wicked, ambitious tyrant Kehama is an Eastern *alter ego* (and, it is hinted, a natural ally) of Napoleon. His epic's opening scene, a funeral at which sati, or widow-burning is practised, probably qualifies as the most frequently imitated

scene in all Romantic poetry. Shelley for example invokes Southey's Hindu pyre twice in *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), an epic in which the French Revolution is relived in the Middle East. It ends not in triumph but in catastrophe: two cruel monotheists, the Turkish emperor Othman and his advisor, a Spanish Catholic priest, burn the hero and heroine, the empire's would-be liberators, in the final *auto da fé*.

To a remarkable degree, the favourite location of English poetry in the second decade of the nineteenth century becomes the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, the route to India. Byron begins his career with a Spenserean epic, *Childe Harold* (1812), that is also a versified travelogue, and so goes one better than Southey, who got his learned annotations from books. The Christian Greeks seek liberation from an alien empire, that of the Turks, and in *Childe Harold II*, and especially *The Giaour* (1813), Byron depicts the cruelty and superstition of the master-race in no favourable light. But he also undercuts the foolish, bigoted Greek Christians: he seems afraid that the revolt, if it comes, may merely give the Greeks a new breed of tyrants. Byron campaigns for a secular liberation of the Greeks, not one on behalf of fellow-religionists: hence his zeal to glamorise, through figures like his Corsair, the real-life pirates and brigands of the Eastern-Mediterranean, equivalents in the period of the modern-day urban terrorist.

In introducing *The Corsair* (1814), Byron himself primed the public to expect an even more thorough-going poem on political and religious nationalism, *Lalla Rookh* (1817), by the Irish poet Tom Moore. In Moore's best-received episode, 'The Fireworshippers', a Persian hero, having failed in his attempt to resist an Arab, Moslem invasion, sets fire to his own citadel and so dies on an altar dedicated to the religion of his own people. This too was an appropriate riposte to Southey for his malignant representation of Hinduism. And so was the final curtain of Byron's magnificent Oriental drama, *Sardanapalus* (1821), when the civilised, agnostic Assyrian monarch, who believes in love, not war or empire, sets fire to himself and his palace. In all these cases, the monotheist imperialists behave a great deal worse than the local resisters. Liberal poets of the second decade of the nineteenth century question the religious generalisations which facilitate colonialism, and, especially, criticise Britain's own role in steadily annexing India.

Byron's Oriental poems need to be taken seriously, and set beside the great unfinished satirical epic, *Don Juan* (1819–24), which in the English-speaking world has become his chief claim to fame. For both the major themes he shares with Shelley – the assault upon institutional religion, and the representation of Western states as evil, oligarchic empires – can be read as metaphorical. The church is the means whereby the state cunningly

imposes itself at home; the theme of empire shows it imposing itself by force abroad. The poets' selective, hostile portrayal of a tyrannous state coincides with a period of mass unrest and renewed radical polemic; from 1816, when the heyday of Byron and Shelley begins, William Cobbett, the greatest journalist of the day, was informing a popular readership more directly and bluntly of the iniquities of a political system he described as 'Old Corruption'. As metaphors, church and empire compare interestingly with pre-war nature and nationhood. There is a shift from positive to negative: early nineteenth-century poetry becomes blacker, more satirical. But the focus on the actual doings of the state tends also to be literal and detailed, to appeal to a knowledge of recent events, even personalities, while eighteenth-century poets engaged in a more generalised, fanciful, farflung search to give social body to the concept of country.

#### THE 1820s

The 1820s saw the end of the brilliantly productive post-war era of poetry. Posterity has tended to the view that the great epoch was rounded off by the early deaths of the three leading poets of the younger generation, Keats in 1821, Shelley in 1822 and Byron in 1824. At the time it was observed that poetry was becoming commercially less profitable. Already by the end of his short career the youngest of the poets, Keats, was moving away from the example of the slightly older fellow-liberals, his friend Leigh Hunt and his acquaintance Shelley, who both thought Keats ideologically one of themselves. A man of lower-middle-class origins, the son of an ostler, Keats had received a good secular education at a Dissenting academy, but was uninterested in the public sphere of power-politics which for Byron and Shelley was a natural habitat. He plainly found in Wordsworth a professionalism, a singleminded devotion to the craft of poetry, which he could respond to. And it is Wordsworth and Keats who have on the whole been regarded by English-speaking readers as the leading literary artists of the period, the prototypes of the modern writer absorbed in self, haunted by words, private, dedicated, specialised. Between 1818 and 1820, Keats turned away from Milton, an important earlier model but a public poet, and sought instead to recover the richness, warmth, dispassionateness and unintellectuality of Shakespeare. He was never drawn to the Shakespeare that more radical readers had read as a festive, near-anonymous poet of the people. Like the two great post-war Shakespearean critics, Hazlitt and Coleridge, Keats was interested in the tragedies, as private introverted dramas of individual character, rather than in the histories and comedies. He was similarly selective with other fashionable motifs. He took the mythological subjects which for the Shelley circle became the

occasion for critiques of Christianity, and (in *Lamia* and in the epic fragment *Hyperion*, both 1820) turned them into the family dramas of realised human personalities. In these, in narrative poems such as *The Eve of St Agnes*, and above all in his *Odes*, Keats treats poetry as though its natural subject is not politics and civic morality but art and private feeling.

Keats constructed a separate literary sphere, in which Beauty alone ruled. It was a well-timed move, for the ever-growing middle-class reading public wanted books that treated the ideal in a religious or at least idealistic way, and avoided satire and profanity. Together with the high-minded and more directly consoling Wordsworth, Keats helped pave the way for the poetry of the second quarter of the century, ruled over by Tennyson, the idealist, aesthete and Christian moralist. At the same time the public acquired a taste for a new kind of literary celebrity, the essayist or journalist. Especially when writing strongly characterised confessional fragments of autobiography, informal versions of Wordsworth's lofty but still-unpublished *Prelude* (begun in 1797, published 1850), prose-writers now familiarised the public with an unequivocally Romantic genre, the self-portrait of an artist. Charles Lamb's humorous, melancholy reminiscences, *The Essays of Elia*, and William Hazlitt's often self-tormenting *Table-Talk* first appeared in the *London Magazine* early in the 1820s. Thomas De Quincey's more sustained fictionalised autobiography, *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, appeared in the same venue in 1820-1, and may have helped to provoke Hazlitt's strange masterpiece, the love-letters he issued as an epistolary novel, the *Liber Amoris* (1823).<sup>24</sup> When we think of English 'Romantic prose', we do not on the whole think of books or essays about literature, philosophy or aesthetics, such as are found in German, but of this type of occasional, informal writing aimed at the general public rather than at other intellectuals. An early European intellectual in England (to be followed in the next generation by Carlyle, Ruskin, Macaulay, Mill and Arnold) is Coleridge, who now after 1820 belatedly acquired a significant literary following. His polymathic reading and his profound religious sensibility bore fruit at last in an exalted vein of social criticism. His late books, especially *The Aids to Reflection* (1825) and *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1830), impressed a student generation caught in the grip of the religious revival far more than his early political essays and mid-life literary criticism had impressed his contemporaries.

What academics now call the period of 'High Romanticism' in England had been and gone without making much impact on the nation's favourite literary form, the novel. The six major poets attempted drama but none completed a novel, except Shelley with two juvenile experiments with the Gothic, *Zastrozzi* and *St Irvyne*. Until 1814, when Scott's *Waverley*

appeared, it seemed to be taken for granted that the novel was a woman's form, which treated daily life and domestic concerns by means of its favourite plot, a young woman's (or, more rarely, a young man's) preparation for marriage. The novelist whom English-speaking readers now rate supreme in the period, Jane Austen (1775–1817), uses this format and is not considered one of the Romantics. Nor are the other leading women novelists, Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth. But the man who intruded on their domain, the poet Walter Scott, has not struck most of his recent admirers as precisely Romantic either, for Scott opened with a brilliant series of social, national novels, portraying the Scotland of living memory, or only just beyond it.

Scott's commanding prestige as a novelist for more than a decade is an interesting example, among other things, of the effect that the early nineteenth-century professionalising of literature had on women's saliency as writers. He successfully introduced into his novels his own wealth of worldly knowledge, his interest in the nation's affairs, and his formidable antiquarian scholarship. Especially as practised by many women writers, the novel had not seemed to demand many qualifications in the way of experience or education, and one result of Scott's making the historical novel and the panoramic social novel fashionable was that women novelists became relatively less successful until the emergence after 1840 of Elizabeth Gaskell and the Brontës. But it is wrong to exaggerate the limited horizons of the woman's novel as Scott found it. Its ability to portray the irrational had been imaginatively extended by Ann Radcliffe in her dreamily-landscaped historical novels of the 1790s. The Anglo-Irish gentlewoman Maria Edgeworth initiated the regional novel with *Castle Rackrent* (1800), a remarkable technical experiment in which an Irish servant narrates in his own peasant accents the decline and fall of his master's dynasty. After this a number of other women novelists took up and excelled in similar genre-pieces, including Elizabeth Hamilton, Susan Ferrier and Lady Morgan (*née* Sydney Owenson).

Also before Scott, and also ambitiously, a type of novel-of-ideas, or *tendenz-roman*, was developed in the 1790s by, among others, William Godwin, whose masterpiece *Caleb Williams* (1794) borrows some Gothic settings and a thrilling suspense-plot to act out the conflict of class between the aristocrat Falkland and the plebeian Caleb Williams. M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1795), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) have come to be known collectively as 'Gothic' novels, and to be associated with Romantic irrationality, but this is to overlook their structural formality, and the one essential characteristic they have in common. All their protagonists are obsessives seized with a

pernicious idea, a notion which leads to the disintegration not only of the hero but of his loved ones and of the entire civic order: they seem to have been read as, and intended for, allegories of revolution. And indeed Scott too, far more than has generally been recognised, tends to write on this theme, especially after 1820. In later novels such as *The Monastery*, *The Abbot* and *Redgauntlet*, he is drawn not to portray the medieval world for characteristics special to itself, but for the danger of breakdown it shares with the modern world. The theme, and the pessimism it induces, may resemble qualities in E. T. A. Hoffmann's brilliant German tales, but the differences are equally interesting, for by their intellectualism and their structural formality the English novels remain committed to identified rational positions – social progress and egalitarianism in Godwin's case, for example, or Protestantism as opposed to Irish Catholic Emancipation in Maturin's.

Movements, like periods, cannot be expected to begin or end tidily. Individual writers are often hard to classify. One of the most remarkable of English poets is the Northamptonshire labourer John Clare (1793–1864), who wrote prolifically through the 1820s and 1830s, poetry and prose, songs, ballads, loving observations of bird and human life, desolate accounts of himself; then, breaking down, he spent more than a quarter of a century in two asylums for the insane. Nothing could be more evidently Romantic, except that Clare also represents the perfect late flowering of the eighteenth-century English provincial or 'country' tradition. He even joined it consciously, by training himself to be a poet through reading Thomson and Burns. Like Crabbe, that other village poet, he was a meticulous and scientific observer, who kept notes of birds, their plumage, song, habitats and nests, and of village sports, customs and songs. Some he sent in to William Hone, the radical publisher, who brought out a large two-volume *Everyday Book* made up of such local records in 1829. Clare intended, he wrote in 1825, to compile a Natural History of Helpston, his village, and this is one way of summarising his oeuvre, though the poems especially convey an emotion outside the range of most anthropology, the alienation of the observer from the community he observes.

Coming late as he did to the ideal of creating popular, simple or universally human poetry, Clare was cursed with too much consciousness. Well-wishers like Lamb and Clare's publisher John Taylor, who had also published Keats, urged him to use the written language, standard metropolitan English, as the only fit medium for poetry. Taylor indeed, after initially tolerating Clare's provincialisms as curiosities, took to 'correcting' them wholesale. But when he tried to disallow the expression 'eggs on', Clare's reply shows his understanding that his language was not to be separated from all the features of place, time and class that made up his experience.

'Whether provincial or not I cannot tell; but it is common with the vulgar (I am of that class) and I heartily desire no word of mine to be altered.'<sup>25</sup> Like Ritson and Spence,<sup>26</sup> he went his own way with spelling, and when he came to treat a wintry morning, a familiar set-piece for eighteenth-century nature poets from Thomson on, his deployment of dialect powerfully conveys intransigence: it will not let the comfortable town dweller settle into the scene. The opening of Clare's sonnet seems almost impudently to parody Taylor's more biddable author, Keats:

O for a pleasant book to cheat the sway  
Of winter – where rich mirth with hearty laugh  
Listens and rubs his legs on corner seat  
For fields are mire and sludge – and badly off  
Are those who on their pudgy paths delay  
There striding shepherd seeking driest way  
Fearing nights wetshod feet and hacking cough  
That keeps him waken till the peep of day  
Goes shouldering onward and with ready hook  
Progs oft to ford the sloughs that nearly meet  
Across the lands – croodling and thin to view  
His loath dog follows – stops and quakes and looks  
For better roads – till whistled to pursue  
Then on with frequent jump he hirkles through.

The rage and loathing of the man and the dog for their element is duplicated by the rage of the poet, who, burdened and clogged with his rough vocabulary, can only contend with his medium. The smooth language of the rich belongs to the rich, and so, perhaps, does poetry itself, especially a form like the sonnet. A provincial poet in the nineteenth century who is also a labourer cannot be unaware of his own marginality.

What, then, of the later eighteenth-century poet? Labourers wrote verse then, but to become an established, professional poet, selling to the public, was a far more remote possibility. It was the public success of poetry and the general professionalising of literature in the early nineteenth century that opened doors to educated middle-class writers without patronage, but much less often and less widely to working men and to women. Clare's bitter sense of exclusion from London as from Helpston casts a curious light not only on the very different experience of his near-contemporary Keats, but also on the eighteenth-century country poet in the patriot tradition. Poets from Thomson to the Wordsworth of *The Lyrical Ballads* could claim to be speaking for the 'real' nation, that is for the majority of the people, by defining them in contradistinction to the minority who spoke for the 'official' nation in the capital. The sense of class was not yet

so general or well-articulated that it exposed the fallacy of a middle-class writer's claiming an identity of interest with the illiterate masses.

For the purposes of writing poetry, it perhaps did not matter that such claims to representativeness were spurious, or that the poets' rhetoric was more radical than their practical politics, as the testing times of the 1790s showed. Merely to believe in a community of shared interests, in the reality of 'the patriot nation' or alternatively 'the republic of letters' was inspiring enough, especially for individual writers who might in real life be isolated and socially obscure. The new, large and unjaded eighteenth-century audience created conditions which allowed, even demanded, the redefinition of the world and of the self. The newly devised figure of the common reader has a central role in this story, for it is to him and to her that we ultimately owe Romanticism, the most broadly accessible and powerfully activating of literary movements.

#### NOTES

- 1 Standard works on English Romanticism which have influenced perceptions of its important writers, its date of commencement and its place in the history of ideas include René Wellek, 'The concept of Romanticism in literary history', *Comparative Literature*, 1 (1949), and *A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 3 (London, 1957); M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York, 1953), *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York, 1971), and his selections for the period in the *Norton Anthology*; Northrop Frye, beginning with his book on Blake, *A Fearful Symmetry* (New York, 1947); Harold Bloom, *A Visionary Company* (New York and London, 1962), and subsequent work. Among studies published in England are Basil Willey, *Nineteenth-Century Studies* (London, 1949), Graham Hough, *The Romantic Poets* (London, 1953), and the broad survey, including England, by H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics* (London, 1966).
- 2 Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814* (New Haven, 1964).
- 3 For recent work by historians on the eighteenth-century patriot movement, see Hugh Cunningham, 'The language of patriotism, 1750–1914', *History Workshop*, 12 (1981), 8–33; Linda Colley, 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain, 1750–1830', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), 96–117, and J. R. Dinwiddy, 'Patriotism and national sentiment in England, 1790–1805', paper delivered Paris, Nov. 1985.
- 4 Gray's *Commonplace Book*, in three volumes containing a thousand pages, is in Pembroke College, Cambridge. He handed over some of his material to his friend and fellow-poet Thomas Warton, whose own *History of English Poetry* appeared in 1774–88. But, though Warton followed Gray's anti-French lead by representing English poetry arriving at maturity around 1600, he omitted Gray's Welsh and Norse researches, beginning instead in 1100.
- 5 Gray's 'Elegy' was much reprinted in both England and America as a popular, anti-aristocratic poem; cf. John Brand on Gray as 'the poet of humanity',



- Popular Antiquities*, ed. Sir Henry Ellis, new edn, 3 vols. (1895), p. ixn. (from Brand's Preface, dated 1795).
- 6 James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1953) p. 302.
  - 7 For Macpherson's reception in Germany, see especially Bernhard Fabian, 'English books and their German readers', in Paul J. Korshin (ed.), *The Widening Circle: Essays on the Circulation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 127. His impact on Europe in general is surveyed in Paul van Tieghem, *Ossian en France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1917), and 'Ossian et l'ossianisme dans la littérature européenne au XVIIIe siècle', in his *Le Preromantisme* (Paris, 1924), pp. 195–287. Macpherson's achievement and significance have been thoughtfully reassessed by Howard Gaskill, 'Ossian Macpherson: towards a rehabilitation', *Comparative Criticism*, 8 (1986), 113–46.
  - 8 Robert Anderson (ed.), *Works of the British Poets*, 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1792–5), and Alexander Chalmers (ed.), *Works of the English Poets*, 21 vols. (London, 1810). 'It need be no surprise that moderation, decorum, restraint and propriety were the criteria controlling admission . . . , the very qualities which have helped to impart an air of remoteness and insubstantiality to much eighteenth-century poetry. There could be no place for the eccentric, the vulgar, the extravagant, the disturbing, the subversive.' Roger Lonsdale, *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* (Oxford, 1984), p. xxxvi.
  - 9 See for example Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, and Lawrence Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1970).
  - 10 Ritson's most important single work was probably his *Select Collection of English Songs*, 3 vols. (London, 1783). Blake was one of a team of engravers who worked on the illustrations done for this book by Thomas Stothard: both the drawing and engraving styles aimed at reproducing the folk art effect of woodcut. Ritson prefaces the volume with his important 'Historical Essay on National Song', in which he censures Percy and Warton for carelessness and for a bias towards gentility. Even more popular and widely influential was his *Robin Hood: A Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballads, now Extant*, 2 vols. (London, 1795), in which he argues polemically and topically that the songs amount to the populace's own history of their experiences and attitudes, an element missing from official written history. See my *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 203–5.
  - 11 E.g., Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) and *A Provincial Glossary* (1787).
  - 12 Both Ritson and Thomas Spence (1750–1814), a self-educated pamphleteer who preached an agrarian communism, also campaigned for a simplified spelling. But the most celebrated single effort to challenge orthodox grammar in the interests of the radicals was John Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*, 2 vols. (1786, 1805). See M. Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640–1785* (Baltimore, 1977), J. Barrell, 'The language properly so called', in *English Literature in History, 1730–1780* (London, 1983), and Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language* (Oxford, 1984).
  - 13 Though the prestigious painters of the day such as Reynolds and West were offered tragic or serious historical subjects, Winifred Friedman points out in *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery* (New York, 1975) that illustrations for the comedies by Henry Fuseli and Robert Smirke attracted quite as much notice,

- and were held to realise particularly well the distinct qualities of Shakespeare and of his characters. Smirke specialised in scenes of broad comedy set in low or middle life, for which he used a style of semi-caricature in the English tradition derived from Hogarth. Fuseli invoked a stronger, more grotesque and even horrific tradition of German folk art in order to realise the witches in *Macbeth* or the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 14 For Iolo Morganwg and his colleague William Owen Pughe, both of whom seem to have had an extensive but largely undocumented acquaintance among London writers, see Gwyn Williams, above, pp. 9–36. Accounts of Iolo's career which bring out the qualities that could have appealed to English writers have been given by Prys Morgan, *Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff, 1975); *A New History of Wales: The Eighteenth-Century Renaissance* (Llandybie, 1981); 'The hunt for the Welsh past in the Romantic period', *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge, 1983).
  - 15 William Blake, *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. D. V. Erdman (New York, 1982), pp. 542–3.
  - 16 [Iolo Morganwg], *Llywarc Hen: Heroic Elegies*, ed. W. Owen [Pughe] (London, 1792), p. lviii.
  - 17 Blake's probable conservative sources were two volumes by the Rev. Edmund Davies, rector of Bishopston, Glamorgan, *Celtic Researches* (1804) and *Mythology and Rites of the British Druids* (1809). Davies became outspoken about the ideological bias of Owen and Iolo, particularly in the *Llywarc Hen* volume. 'The principles here announced, seem to go rather beyond the levellers of the seventeenth century, and to savour of a Druidism which originated in Gaul, and was from thence transplanted into some corners of Britain, not many ages before 1792, when the memorial of Bardism made its appearance.' *Mythology and Rites*, pp. 56–7.
  - 18 Blake, *Jerusalem*, ch. 2, Plate 27.
  - 19 For a detailed study of the poem as a commentary on the processes of historical transmission, see Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 135–72.
  - 20 'Wordsworth's pastoral prospect is a fragile affair, artfully assembled by acts of exclusion.' Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 32, in a discussion of 'Tintern Abbey' to which mine is indebted.
  - 21 James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 84–92.
  - 22 Hazlitt, 'Mr Wordsworth', *Spirit of the Age* (1825); *Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London 1931), XI.87.
  - 23 See e.g. Southey, *Quarterly Review*, 1 (Feb. 1809), 217, and other reviews by Southey on missions to India in the *Annual Review* (1802 and 1803).
  - 24 See my 'Long tradition of Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*', in *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, ed. Claude Rawson (Oxford, 1984), pp. 209–25.
  - 25 John Clare to John Taylor, quoted by John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 126.
  - 26 See above, n. 12.