Table of Contents

A Forum: Presentism vs. Archivalism in Research & in the Classroom

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

About This Volume

This volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* includes an editor's introduction by Laura Mandell, essays by Ron Broglio, Jay Clayton, Atara Stein, Ted Underwood. The volume also includes a forum entitled "Presentism vs. Archivalism in Research and the Classroom." The forum is introduced by Laura Mandell, and contributors include Phillip Barrish, Jon Klancher, Jerome McGann, David Simpson, and Gregory Tomso.

The original impetus for *Romanticism and Contemporary Culture* was a virtual conference hosted by Romantic Circles in its Villa Diodati MOO space. The log of the discussion, based on the essays of Clayton, Stein and Underwood included in this volume, is available at Romantic Circles, at its Virtual Conferences site.

The text is encoded in HTML, but features no frames and a limited use of tables. It will work best with Netscape 4.0 or Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher or a comparable browser; earlier browsers may not display everything properly. Because you may enter and exit these files along multiple paths, you may need to use the back-arrow button on your browser to return to your starting point. The full text of the volume, like all hypertexts in the *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, is fully searchable.

The essays and other files were marked up in HTML by Joseph Byrne at the University of Maryland. The volume cover and contents page were also designed and marked up by Joseph Byrne.

About the Romantic Circles Praxis Series

The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** is devoted to using computer technologies for the contemporary critical investigation of the languages, cultures, histories, and theories of Romanticism. Tracking the circulation of Romanticism within these interrelated domains of knowledge, **RCPS** recognizes as its conceptual terrain a world where Romanticism has, on the one hand, dissolved as a period and an idea into a plurality of discourses and, on the other, retained a vigorous, recognizable hold on the intellectual and theoretical discussions of today. **RCPS** is committed to mapping out this terrain with the best and mo st exciting critical writing of contemporary Romanticist scholarship. The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** was formerly known as **Romantic Praxis: Theory and Criticism**. The name was changed in November 1999.

About the Contributors

Phillip Barrish teaches American literature at the University of Texas at Austin. His *American Literary Realism, Critical Theory, and Intellectual Prestige 1880-1995*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2001.

Ron Broglio is a Brittain Fellow at Georgia Tech. He is currently working on a book entitled *Landscape Technologies: British Landscape 1740-1830*. As Associate Editor of Romantic Circles he works on the relationship between digital technology and Romantic writing as realized in RC's Villa Diodati MOO and forthcoming new media projects.

Jay Clayton is Professor of English literature at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *Romantic Vision and the Novel* and *The Pleasures of Babel: Contemporary American Literature and Theory*. He has recently completed a book manuscript entitled *Charles Dickens in Cyberspace, Or, Literature in an Age of Cultural Studies*.

Michael Eberle-Sinatra (Volume Co-Editor) is Assistant Professor of Nineteenth-Century British Literature at the University of Montreal. He is the founding editor of *Romanticism On the Net*, the editor, with Laura Mandell, of the Features & Events page of Romantic Circles, and the general editor, with Thomas C. Crochunis, of the *British Women Playwrights around 1800* project. He has edited a collection of essays on Mary Shelley, *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Faulkner* (Macmillan, 2000), and has published several articles on Coleridge, Wagner, Leigh Hunt, and Percy and Mary Shelley. He is also the general editor, with Robert Morrison, of *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt* (forthcoming from Pickering & Chatto, 2002).

Jon Klancher teaches nineteenth century literature and cultural studies at Carnegie Mellon University. He is author of *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (1987) and has published essays on nineteenth-century popular writing, the political history of Romantic criticism, genre, Coleridge, Godwin, and other figures in *ELH*, *Studies in Romanticism*, *MLQ*, and other journals. He has also edited a collection of articles, "Romanticism and Its Publics: A Forum," for *SiR*. Among awards, he has held Guggenheim, NEH, and Mellon fellowships.

Laura Mandell (Volume Co-Editor) is Associate Professor of English at Miami University. Her research interests span the eighteenth century and British Romantic period, as does her first book, *Misogynous Economies: The Business of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1999). She is co-editor of The Romantic Chronology and of several sections of Romantic Circles: The Anthologies Page, The Features Page, and The Pedagogy Page.

Jerome McGann, whose continuing work on the Internet is currently featured at Romantic Circles, first became notorious for publication of *The Romantic Ideology* in 1983, which famously questions the ideological investments of literary criticism. McGann has long been a talented interpreter of the ideologies informing textual dissemination based on the material conditions of reproduction. He shows definitively, in his new book *Radiant Textuality*, how the historical conditions of production and consumption have affected reception history. McGann has been well placed to make sense of "the famous proverb that . . . define[s] the coming of the digital age . . . : The Medium is the Message."

David Simpson has spent his career grappling with the degree to which Romantic writers attempt to make authoritative pronouncements about history, beginning with his first full-length book, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (1979), up through and including his two books about Wordsworth (*Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real* [1982]; *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry Of Displacement* [1987]). Simpson's recent work questions the political efficacy of cultural studies, of what he calls in the title of his important book, *The Academic Postmodern*.

Atara Stein is an associate professor at Cal State University, Fullerton. She has recently completed a book-length manuscript on the Byronic hero in popular culture and also teaches a graduate seminar on the topic.

Gregory Tomso received his Ph.D. in English from Duke University in December, 2001. He is currently

teaching at Ithaca College in upstate New York.

Ted Underwood is assistant professor of English at Colby College. His articles have appeared in *PMLA*, *Modern Language Quarterly*, and *Studies in Romanticism*.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Introduction

Laura Mandell, Miami University of Ohio

1. On June 17, 2000, the Romantic Circles MOO hosted a conference called "Romanticism and Contemporary Culture." The papers appearing in this issue by Ron Broglio, Jay Clayton, Atara Stein, and Ted Underwood were first "delivered" at that conference. That is, shorter versions of these essays were posted on a web site, and then approximately ten people met in the MOO at a specific time to discuss them. Our discussion was extensive. We discussed how copyright law affects readings of contemporary cultural artifacts (it is extraordinarily expensive to quote contemporary musical lyrics); we thought about how methods for raising and lowering cultural capital differ between the Romantic era and our own time. The essays themselves are primarily about teaching Romanticism in the context of popular culture. During our virtual discussion, Atara coined the term "fan/academic" to describe similarities between the kinds of emotional cathexes fixating students to popular culture and academics to Romantic studies. In various ways, each one of these essays offers a plan for capitalizing on students' emotional investments in contemporary cultural artifacts as a way of bringing them to understand the past and then using that understanding to gain critical insight into the present.

2. Broglio, Clayton, Stein, and Underwood describe what are clearly delightful pedagogical moments in the field of Romantic Studies. As ballast, then, we have added to this special issue a section titled "Presentism versus Archivalism" in order to address theoretically the problem of how the present moment enters into Romanticists' pedagogy and research. Not surprisingly, theory offers a darker view of fan/academicism, complicating our understanding of possible relations to the past. A separate introduction by Laura Mandell describes the debate more specifically, but basically we have reproduced in this issue of *Praxis* an essay by David Simpson attacking presentism, and then four defences of it by Phillip Barrish, Gregory Tomso, Jon Klancher, and Jerome McGann. Since Barrish and Tomso work in the field of nineteenth-century American literature, we can call this theoretical interlude "transatlantic."

3. Both practically and theoretically, then, all the essays in "Romanticism and Contemporary Culture" try to think about the similarities and differences between the fan's love for pop culture and the academic's love for literary history. Fan/academicism is indeed a love story, Romantic to the core.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Cultural Patchwork in the Classroom: Shelley Jackson, Tom Stoppard, William Gibson, and Bruce Sterling Rewrite the Romantics

Jay Clayton, Vanderbilt University

"**At first I couldn't think what to make her of.** I collected bones from charnel houses, *paragraphs from Heart of Darkness,* and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame, **but finally in searching through a chest in a solitary chamber,** or rather cell, **at the top of the house, I came across an old patchwork quilt,** a fabric of relations, **which my grandmother once made when she was young.**"
—Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*

1. This patchwork of quotations appears in the "Crazy Quilt" section of Shelley Jackson's innovative hypertext fiction, *Patchwork Girl* (1995). The section, consisting entirely of short passages of this sort, is an intertextual scrapbook of readings that have contributed to Jackson's text—in this instance, **fragments from a children's book by L. Frank Baum**, Mary Shelley's first novel, *an instruction manual on composing hypertext,* and a work of postmodern theory by Jean-François Lyotard. The epigraph may stand as a symbol of the kind of instructional patchwork often called for by teachers who want to respond to the diverse cultural influences on today's Romantics classroom. It is the kind of hybrid pedagogy that results when academic professionals nurtured on literary theory, cultural studies, gender issues, and multiculturalism meet students who are immersed in popular culture, savvy about the new media, and adept at using electronic technology to download their music, send Instant Messages to their friends, and research their term papers.

2. Since 1996 I have taught a number of courses with a "patchwork" design, courses that focus simultaneously on nineteenth-century English literature and on the strange, misshapen afterlife of that literature in the contemporary world. These classes range from undergraduate surveys for English majors on "The Nineteenth-Century English Novel" to graduate seminars on particular aspects of the same subject. In courses oriented toward contemporary issues, such as a Freshman seminar titled "Hypertext: Reading and Writing Online," I include Romantic-era material, and in graduate seminars on topics such as cultural studies, postmodernism, and literary theory, I also make room for investigations of nineteenth-century literature.[1] All of these courses are available on the web, and I will have more to say about the role of computers in this kind of Humanities pedagogy. These courses stem in part from the conjunction of my research interests in the two areas, and in part from students' aptitudes and interests. There are more intellectually significant reasons, however, for bringing the time periods together.

3. The first involves the unusual historical and theoretical insights made possible by juxtaposing Romanticism and contemporary culture. There are odd, unsettling continuities—as well as gaping disjunctions—between Romantic and postmodern attitudes toward a host of topics: subjectivity, the sublime, formal fragmentation, science, technology, the environment, and more. Lately, critics have begun to talk about these affinities in theoretical and philosophical terms.[2] In the classroom, however, it is often more effective to dramatize such parallels through multimedia presentations or with examples drawn from material culture—consumer products, architecture, and the practices of everyday life. Such contemporary media and practices highlight the altered cultural contexts in which today's

Romantic survivals must make their way. Putting Frankenstein's monster side by side with Donna Haraway's cyborg, the replicants in Ridley Scott's movie *Blade Runner*, and Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* reveals as much about its discontinuities with the contemporary world as about its uncanny afterlife. In a historically based class one must be sensitive not just to the analogous but also to the anomalous. Perhaps the most important lesson such a hybrid course teaches is that similar, even identical phenomena can have very different meanings at different times. One of the chief purposes of comparing works from widely separated times is to measure the distance traveled, the forces that made the journey possible, and the consequences of arriving at a new place and a new hour.

4. A second reason for undertaking this kind of class is the extraordinary burgeoning of contemporary texts that engage with the culture of Romanticism. *Blade Runner* and *Patchwork Girl* are just the tip of the iceberg of the recent fascination with rewriting the Romantic era. Looking around at the contemporary scene, the teacher confronts a bewildering array of allusions to Romanticism, a hodgepodge of trivia and clichés, as well as more illuminating images in novels, films, and digital media. From Hollywood remakes of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to websites marketing Regency fashion; from novels set in the Romantic age such as Richard Sennett's *Palais-Royal* (1986), Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover* (1992), Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Blue Flower* (1995), and Andrea Barrett's *Ship Fever* (1996) to Tom Stoppard's witty play *Arcadia* (1993); from Neal Stephenson's cyberpunk science fiction *The Diamond Age* (1995), which frequently invokes Romantic poetry and philosophy, to William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's alternative history of the nineteenth-century, *The Difference Engine* (1991)—nostalgic trips back to the earlier period are a major growth industry today.[3]

5. Classes using such material often require modifying one's usual teaching approach. Generally, one will not want to include more than one or two contemporary texts, unless one is willing to give up the focus on the prior century and pursue a topic that crosses entirely between eras. For teachers who are thinking of adding contemporary material to their Romantics course, I have three recommendations to offer. I will key each point to a brief discussion of a contemporary text that I have found to work well when teaching the nineteenth century.

   - Consider picking a contemporary text that is very different from the Romantic works covered in the class, not a version of one of the assigned texts. Discussion: Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*.
   - Consider using the contemporary text to explore theoretical questions of history, genre, periodization, reception, or intertextuality rather than to trace thematic parallels. Discussion: William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's *The Difference Engine*.
   - Try assigning student projects that combine literary research with hands-on work in the new media. Discussion: Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*.

   [***Note:****Subscribers of* The Chronicle of Higher Education *can read an article about this essay, published on Friday, March 22, 2002*.]

Works Cited

Austen, Jane. <u>Emma</u>. Ed. James Kinsley. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

---. <u>Persuasion</u>. 1818. Ed. Patricia Meyer Spacks. New York: Norton, 1995.

Barrett, Andrea. <u>Ship Fever and Other Stories</u>. New York: Norton, 1996.

Baum, L. Frank. <u>The Patchwork Girl of Oz</u>. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1913.

Black, Joel. *The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture*. Baltimore:

Johns Hopkins UP, 1991.

Blade Runner. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, Daryl Hannah. Ladd Co., 1986.

Bolter, Jay David, Michael Joyce, John B. Smith, Mark Bernstein. Getting Started With Storyspace. Watertown, MA: Eastgate Systems, 1990-1993.

Christensen, Jerome.?"Using: Romantic Ethics and Digital Media in the Ruins of the University."?n *Romanticism at the End of History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. 177-206.

Clayton, Jay.?"Concealed Circuits: Frankenstein's Monster, the Medusa, and the Cyborg." *Raritan* 15:4 (1996): 53-69.

Clueless. Dir. Amy Heckerling. Perf. Alicia Silverstone, Paul Rudd, Brittany Murphy, Justin Walker, Wallace Shawn. Paramount, 1995.

Collins, Wilkie. The Moonstone. 1868. Ed. John Sutherland. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.

Derrida, Jacques. Dissemination. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1981.

Disraeli, Benjamin. Sybil, or The Two Nations. London: Oxford UP, [1950].

Dunn, Katherine. Geek Love. New York: Knopf, 1989.

Emma. Dir. Douglas McGrath. Perf. Gwyneth Paltrow, Toni Collette, Alan Cumming, Ewan McGregor, Jeremy Northam, Greta Scacchi, Juliet Stevenson, Polly Walker. Miramax, 1996.

Eraserhead. Dir. David Lynch. Perf. John Nance, Charlotte Stewart, Allen Joseph. Libra Films, 1977.

Fitzgerald, Penelope. The Blue Flower. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Foy, George. The Shift. Rpt. Edition. New York: Bantam Books, 1997.

Freaks. Dir. Tod Browning. Perf. Wallace Ford, Leila Hyams, Olga Baclanova, Rosco Ates. Metro-Goldwyn Mayer, 1932.

Galperin, William H. *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.

Gibson, William and Bruce Sterling. *The Difference Engine*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto." In Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literature and Cultural Studies. Ed. Robert Con Davis, Ronald Schleifer. New York: Longman, 1998.

Jackson, Shelley. Patchwork Girl, or, A Modern Monster. Watertown, MA: Eastgate Systems, 1995.

Liu, Alan. "Local Transcendence: Cultural Criticism, Postmodernism, and the Romanticism of Detail." *Representations* 32 (1990): 75-113.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. The Postmodern Condition. Trans. Geoff Bennington, Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1984.

The Man Who Fell to Earth. Dir. Nicholas Roeg. Perf. David Bowie, Candy Clark, Buck Henry, Rip Torn.

British Lion, 1976.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Perf. Kenneth Branagh, Robert De Niro, Helena Bonham Carter. TriStar Pictures, 1994.

McGowan, John. *Postmodernism and Its Critics*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.

Paris Is Burning. Dir. Jennie Livingston. Perf. Pepper Labeija, Kim Pendavis, Freddie Pendavis, Dorian Corey, Venus Xtravaganza, Willi Ninja, Octavia St. Laurent. Off White Productions, 1990.

A Passage to India. Dir. David Lean. Perf. Peggy Ashcroft, Judy Davis, James Fox, Alec Guinness, Nigel Havers, Victor Banerjee. Columbia, 1984.

The Pillow Book. Dir. Peter Greenaway. Perf. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor, Ken Ogata, Yoshi Oida, Hideko Yoshida, Judy Ongg. CFP; Kasander & Wigman; Woodline Films; Alpha Films, 1996.

Prospero's Books. Dir. Peter Greenaway. Perf. John Gielgud, Michael Clark, Isabelle Pasco, Michel Blanc, Erland Josephson, Tom Bell. Miramax, 1991.

Rucker, Rudy. The Hollow Earth. Rpt. Edition. New York: Avon, 1992.

Sennett, Richard. Palais-Royal. New York: Knopf, 1986.

Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus: the 1818 Text. Ed. Marilyn Butler. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.

The Silence of the Lambs. Dir. Jonathan Demme. Perf. Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, Scott Glenn, Ted Levine. Orion Pictures, 1991.

Sontag, Susan. The Volcano Lover. New York: Farr, Strauss, Giroux, 1992.

Stafford, Barbara Maria. Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993.

Stephenson, Neal. The Diamond Age. New York: Bantam, 1995.

Wang, Orrin N. C. *Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Notes

[1] For institutional reasons, chiefly involving the presence of three extraordinary Romanticists—Jerome Christensen, Paul Elledge, and Mark Schoenfield—in a relatively small English department, these courses do not center on Romanticism *per se*, but they invariably contain discussions of Romantic texts and themes.

[2] For examples of such discussions, see Joel Black, Jay Clayton, Jerome Christensen, William Galperin, Alan Liu, John McGowan, and Orrin Wang.

[3] The *Romantic Circles* website maintains a partially annotated bibliography listing many of the

contemporary novels and films devoted to the Romantic era at http://www.rc.umd.edu/reference/ficrep/nassr-sf.html.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Immortals and Vampires and Ghosts, Oh My!: Byronic Heroes in Popular Culture

Atara Stein, California State University, Fullerton

—An omnipotent and immortal superbeing, bored with his omnipotence and immortality, laments sarcastically, "Heavy is the burden of being me!"

—A vampire-turned-rock star violates the principal codes of his own kind with the hope of starting a war to relieve his own boredom.

—A black-clad ghost of a rock star, half-insane with grief, takes revenge on those who murdered him and his fiancée.

—A black-clad Immortal known as the Lord of Dreams, stands barefoot in a rainstorm he has created, his coat swirling around him, as he mourns the failure of yet another love affair.

—A vampire with a soul broods over the guilt of the crimes of his past and longs for the unattainable love of his life.

1. The Byronic hero, with his ambition, aspiration, aggressive individualism, and "Promethean spark," is alive and flourishing in the latter half of the 20th century. Although they may not know it, my students see him again and again on their television screens and in movie theaters. For me, one of the particular interests in teaching the Romantic period is that, in some respects, I believe it has never ended. And the interest in the Romantic poets themselves is a continuing motif in popular culture, from their appearance in such science fiction novels as Tim Powers's *The Anubis Gates* and *The Stress of Her Regard*, Dan Simmons's *Hyperion* series, and Tom Holland's Byron-as-vampire novel, *Lord of the Dead*, to their appearance in such films as *Haunted Summer* and *Gothic* to Byron's appearance in the syndicated television series *Highlander*. Popular music often echoes Romantic themes and makes allusions to Romantic poems, and many rock performers seem reincarnations of the Romantic poets: Jim Morrison of the Doors (Blake mixed with some Byronic flamboyance), Robert Smith of the Cure (mostly Shelley also with some Byronic flamboyance), Morrissey of the Smiths (Shelley), Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails (a combination of Byron and Shelley), and the late Kurt Cobain of Nirvana (mostly Byron again).

2. I cite these examples in class, and students eagerly note them (despite being dead almost 30 years Jim Morrison still has enthusiastic fans among students who were born since his death), but I particularly focus on the pervasiveness of the Byronic hero in popular culture. Drawing such connections allows students a fuller understanding of Byron's work and its cultural context while at the same time providing them with another tool to analyze the films, television series, and books they, as consumers of popular culture, so avidly appreciate. While I discuss these connections in my undergraduate classes, I also created a graduate seminar on the subject, "The Development of the Byronic Hero." It is a topic which engages student interest and provokes some of the most thoughtful and original papers I read each semester, papers which further the work of exploring the dynamic interaction between Byron's works and the dark heroes of contemporary popular culture. I believe my approach particularly resonates with my students because I am an avid fan myself, so I am able to combine an academic and critical perspective with my own enthusiasm for the same popular texts. And a discussion of the Byronic hero often provokes students to come up with their own examples, some of which have helped

me in my own research. A discussion of the links between the Romantic period and contemporary popular culture can make for a truly interactive classroom experience, and the interest and enthusiasm is readily evident in my students' reactions.

3. The Byronic hero is so pervasive in contemporary popular texts that once one begins to establish, in class, the parameters of his type, the examples seem endless. From the Western hero to the science fiction hero to the action-adventure hero, we can find any number of heroes who seem to be descendents of Byron's Manfred. I believe that two of the primary factors that resonate with both nineteenth-century and late-twentieth-century audiences are a voyeuristic interest in the criminal and a conviction of individual powerlessness in the face of wealth and institutional power. In fact, these factors are related, for the criminal (temporarily, at least) escapes the restrictions of law and society to pursue his own desires. We see this fascination in eighteenth-century crime and trial narratives and folk ballads about outlaw heroes, in the figure of the Gothic villain, and in the fictional exploration of the psychology of such villains as Maturin's Melmoth and Collins's Count Fosco, two characters who inspire both fear and desire. The Byronic hero has the same defiance of society's rules and institutions and the same bad-boy appeal of the charismatic villain, combined with an aspiration after generally more admirable goals than those of the typical villain character. In both nineteenth-century and late-twentieth-century texts, the Byronic hero is given superhuman abilities. Given his superior capabilities, the Byronic hero, whether in his nineteenth-century or contemporary incarnation, provides his audience with a satisfying vicarious experience of power (and empowerment, for that matter), autonomy, mastery, and defiance of oppressive authority. At the same time, however, in his superhuman mode, he cannot establish a meaningful connection with his audience. Almost inevitably, however, the hero's creators do not allow him to remain in his superhuman condition; they "rehumanize" him, in effect, and/or have him voice approbation and admiration of ordinary human values. In his superhuman condition he cannot be reintegrated into society, even if he has benefited that society with his heroic actions. He must be rehumanized, exiled, and/or destroyed, all of which serve to leave the audience with a more comfortable identification with the hero. In his superhuman condition, he is an unattainable ideal, a hero who inspires awe but cannot be emulated. At the same time, he lacks social skills and an ability to relate to other people; he is a loner and an outcast, and he can be arrogant, contemptuous of human beings, bad-tempered, overbearing, cold, ruthless, and emotionless. As such, admirable as he is for his abilities and his willingness to take on the powers that be, he is alien to his audience. They find no shared basis for sympathetic identification. If, however, despite his superhuman abilities, he ultimately reaffirms his humanity, he leaves the audience content with their own condition and able to identify with the hero. They cannot be *like him*, and they are flattered that he wishes to be *like them*.

4. The examples listed at the beginning of my essay are not the only ones I refer to in class, but they are some of the most obvious ones. In some cases, their creators deliberately set out to evoke Byron; in other cases I believe that the Byronic hero has become a kind of cultural archetype, and actual knowledge of Byron on the creators' parts is not necessary, although they may well be familiar with the Gothic tradition and the Gothic villain from which the Byronic hero evolved. Bram Stoker's Dracula and his descendents must be a particular influence on creators of dark heroes in popular culture, particularly given the erotic appeal of the vampire villain. I suspect also that the creators of these Byronic heroes are more likely to be familiar with Emily Brontë's Heathcliff than with Byron's heroes. Heathcliff's romantic and erotic appeal is a major contribution to today's Byronic hero. My students refer to the attraction women have for Heathcliff and his literary descendents as the "bad-boy syndrome." In fact, the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* makes a point of self-consciously emphasizing the bad-boy syndrome, exploring the heroine's erotic attraction to vampires, despite her calling to destroy them. In this respect, Buffy, despite her superhuman powers, creates an identification with the audience, many of whom find the vampire characters Angel and Spike irresistibly attractive. This essay will describe, in turn, the examples of Byronic heroes I cited at the beginning.

5. Q (John de Lancie) is an omnipotent and immortal entity who made several appearances on the more recent *Star Trek* series: *The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine*, and *Voyager*. De Lancie deliberately set out to perform the character as one who was "mad, bad, and dangerous to know," having become well-versed in Byronic lore by playing the poet in a play called "Childe Byron." De Lancie also bears a preternatural resemblance to Byron himself. Q appears in several Byronic guises. In the episodes "Hide and Q," "QWho," and "True Q," he is a Satanic tempter, reminiscent of *Cain*'s Lucifer, trying to lure characters with knowledge and power for his own ends, which seem at once both malevolent, and brutally educational for the characters he tempts. In other episodes (most notably "Qless" and "Tapestry"), he resembles the jaded, world-weary narrator of *Don Juan*, cynically decrying the naivete of humans and yet envying their capacity for wonder and idealism. And in "Deja Q," he has been stripped (temporarily it turns out) of his powers, and spends the episode bitterly lamenting the limitations of humanity in a fashion similar to Manfred and to the speaker of Canto 3 of *Childe Harold*. Just as Childe Harold despises his own "human frailties" (3.14) and condemns himself as "A link reluctant in a fleshly chain" (3.72), "Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling" (3.73), and anticipates "when at length the mind shall be all free / From what it hates in this degraded form, / Reft of its carnal life" (3.74), Q abhors the limitations and discomforts to which a physical existence condemns him:

> It was a mistake. I never should have picked human. I knew it the moment I said it. To think of a future in this shell. Forced to cover myself with a fabric because of some outdated human morality. To say nothing of being too hot or too cold. Growing feeble with age. Losing my hair. Catching a disease. Being ticklish. Sneezing. Having an itch. A pimple. Bad breath. Having to bathe?

Manfred and Q similar evince a disdain for human contact and for having to accommodate oneself to such inferior beings. When the Abbot asks Manfred why he did not sustain those "noble aspirations in my youth, / To make my own the mind of other men, / The enlightener of nations" (3.1.105-07), he explains that even the role of leader would be degrading: "I disdained to mingle with / A herd, though to be a leader—and of wolves. / The lion is alone, and so am I" (3.1.121-23). Q similarly expresses his doubt that he will be able to work with the crew of the *Enterprise*: "I'm not good in groups. It's difficult to work in groups when you're omnipotent." Despite Q's stated disdain for humans, he returns repeatedly to the *Enterprise* to torment Captain Picard and his crew. The implication is that he is trying to mitigate the boredom of his immortal existence.

6. The desire for immortality and the discovery that it's not all it's cracked up to be characterizes several contemporary Byronic heroes. A prominent one is Lestat of Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*, the second novel in the series *The Vampire Chronicles*. Rice's own references to Byron suggest that she deliberately casts Lestat into a Byronic mode, and as Kathryn McGinley points out, "For Byronic heroes [. . .] particularly the Ricean version, immortality can be simultaneously desirable and intolerable" (86). Throughout the novel, Lestat is the rebel, defining his own moral code, and rebelling against all authority, both human and vampiric. Lestat sees himself "as a hungry, vicious creature, who did a very good job of existing without reasons, a powerful vampire who always took exactly what he wanted, no matter who said what" (380). As such, he provides a powerful vicarious experience for readers who can't always take exactly what they want. The vampires are appealing characters because they allow readers to experience what they cannot have themselves *and*, at the same time, they share the readers' possible longings for purpose and meaning in a confusing world. Lestat seems reminiscent of Byron's Childe Harold and Cain when he says, "I'd been born restless—the dreamer, the angry one, the complainer" (*VL* 23). The novelist herself, explains, "I've always been fascinated by the vampire, the elegant yet evil Byronic figure. It's easy to say it's a metaphor for the outsider, the predator, anyone who feels freakish or monstrous or out of step but appears normal" (Beahm 135). Rice plays on the rebellious aspects of her outlaw hero to increase his popular appeal, for "the antiestablishment

messages of rock music contribute to the vampire's freedom from conventional moralities and the power of this subversive appeal" (Roberts 52).

7. Lestat is not only an outlaw to human society by virtue of being a vampire, but he is also a rebel among vampires, disregarding their rules and conventions. He conceives of his planned rock concert at the Cow Palace in San Francisco as "an unprecedented rebellion, a great and horrific challenge to my kind all over the world" (*VL* 14). Lestat defiantly announces, "Old rules didn't matter to me now, either. I wanted to break every one of them" (16), and he instantly appeals to every reader who ever broke rules or wanted to but didn't have the means:

> I mean what if they really believed it, really understood that this world still harbored the Old World demon thing, the vampire—oh, what a great and glorious war we might have then!
>
> We would be known, and we would be hunted, and we would be fought in this glittering urban wilderness as no mythic monster has ever been fought by man before.
>
> How could I not love it, the mere idea of it? How could it not be worth the greatest danger, the greatest and most ghastly defeat? Even at the moment of destruction, I would be alive as I have never been. (*VL* 17)

The last sentence is telling—to feel alive would be worth sacrificing his immortality, just for the sensation, a sensation lacking in his vampire existence. When the ancient vampire Marius comes to Lestat in a dream and accuses, "You act on impulse, you want to throw all the pieces in the air," Lestat shouts in return, "I want to affect things, to make something happen!" (*VL* 522). His impulsiveness is simultaneously destructive and the source of his appeal to readers. Like Napoleon, Lestat is "Extreme in all things" (*Childe Harold*, III, 36). The "fire / And motion of the soul" of the Byronic hero is "quenchless evermore" and "Preys upon high adventure" (III, 42). The author herself confesses her affinity for her hero, Lestat: "He's my devil, my dark lover, my alter-ego. Sometimes I think he's my conscience." She notes further, "If you know Lestat, you know he's just dying to get into the spotlight." Rice here describes the appeal of the Byronic hero: demonic, dark, erotically-irresistible, and a voice of conscience, a conscience that may defy the rules of society, but defines its own morality. Yet without his humanity, the Byronic hero would ultimately alienate his readers. We envy his power and autonomy, his ability simply to do what he wants without fear of authority, but we are drawn to his humanity. If such a powerful being suffers from feelings of isolation and confusion and makes terrible errors in his dealings with others, then our own feelings and errors are more acceptable, particularly when we see them glamorized and romanticized in the form of vampires or other similarly powerful entities.

8. Another superhuman Byronic rock star figure is the hero of the film *The Crow* (dir. Alex Proyas, 1994), a favorite of many of my students. He is a ghost who returns a year after his death to revenge the murder of himself and his fiancée by a group of thugs working for the leader of the criminal underworld in Detroit. Eric Draven (Brandon Lee) dresses completely in black, and sports white and black clown make up on his face. Like Lestat and Q, Eric lives by his own rules, resisting the authority of the police department and seeking vigilante justice on his own terms. In between scenes of him killing his enemies while cracking dry jokes and mocking their weaknesses, we see him passionately grieving over his fiancée. In a contemporary version of Manfred perched on an Alpine height, daring the avalanche to come and kill him, Eric crouches on top of an urban skyscraper, strumming haunting chords on an electric guitar, a very portrait of angst. *The Crow* is a good way to discuss the origins of the Byronic hero in the Gothic villain, for Eric, in his madness and bloody vengefulness, is barely one step over the line from the criminals he pursues. This often generates a classroom discussion about the

appeal of villains in popular culture and the particular appeal of heroes whose souls are almost as dark as those of their enemies. Eric also exudes a Byronic arrogance; as a ghost and an outlaw, Eric transcends the law and moral codes of ordinary people. Like the Byronic hero he achieves an almost total autonomy. In his initial encounter with a cop who tries to arrest him, when the cop yells "don't move!" Eric mockingly remarks, "I thought the police always said 'Freeze.'" The cop insists, "Well, I am the police, and I say don't move, Snow White. You move, you're dead," and Eric raises his arms, announcing, "And I say I'm dead, and I *move*."

9. The contemporary Byronic hero is almost always dressed in black; Rice even comments on the way Lestat has created fashion trends among his fans and even other vampires. In his epic series of Sandman comic books, Neil Gaiman also envisions his hero, Dream, also known as Lord Morpheus, in the same terms. Gaiman describes him as looking "like the skinny, undead king of the style biker punks from hell" (Gaiman 26), and as "pale, tall, brooding, dark, relatively humorless, and Byronic in a late adolescent kind of way" (Bender 238). Dream is the lord of the realm of dreams (known as "the Dreaming"), and he is immortal, older even than the gods. While he is extremely powerful, he remains vulnerable in his relationships with women, which invariably fail. After one lover leaves him, his emotions create rainstorms all over his realm, and he orders her rooms erased and forbids any mention of her name. We see him, in Chapter 2 of *Brief Lives*, leaning on a balcony in a quintessentially Romantic pose, barefoot, rain streaming around him, and his dark cloak flapping in the wind. His face is set and grim, and the drops running down it could be either rain or tears or both. Dream's melancholy is countered by the ever-practical Mervyn, a handyman with a jack-o-lantern head who does odd jobs around the Dreaming. When the faerie girl Nuala sympathizes with Dream, remarking that he must be "very *sad*," Mervyn retorts,

> Nah. He en*joys* it. I mean, hell, it's a *pose*, y'know? He spends a coupla months hanging out with a new broad. Then one day the magic's worn off, and *he* goes back to work, and *she* takes a hike. Phhhht. Now, guys like *me*, ordinary joes, *we* just shrug our shoulders, say, hey, that's *life*, flick it if you can't take a joke. Not *him*. Oh no. *He's* gotta be the tragic figure standing out in the rain, mournin' the loss of his beloved. So *down* comes the rain, right on cue. In the meantime everybody gets dreams fulla existential angst and wakes up feeling like *hell*. And *we* all get wet. (Ch. 2, 4-5)

Gaiman creates a protagonist who embodies existential angst, and he clothes him with all the attributes of the Romantic hero: black garb, black hair, pale skin, and a hopeless love life. But he also includes the voice of an anti-romantic, who dismisses it all as a pose, and the artist's drawings of Dream corroborate Mervyn's suspicions. Dream is a cliché of Romantic melancholy, and he strikes theatrical and melodramatic poses as he leans on his balcony in the rain, too distracted even to put on a pair of shoes, although he has donned the required black cape. Like Manfred, he is pompously arrogant and largely unsympathetic to human concerns. But his end is a heroic one, like Manfred's. Having incurred the vengeance of the Furies, while performing an act his sense of conscience and duty told him was right, he braves their attacks on himself and his realm. His death is inevitable, but like Byron's Manfred, he defies those who come to claim him and dies on his own terms, in a state of defiance, thereby, like Byron's Prometheus, "making Death a Victory."

10. The most recent example of a Byronic hero that I use in class is the vampire Angel (David Boreanaz), who began as a character on the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and now has his own spinoff series, *Angel*. Angel, a vampire whose soul has been restored by a gypsy curse, broods over his guilt for his crimes in his past. He was among the most powerful of vampires, Angelus, a conscienceless and remorseless killer with a sardonic and bitter sense of humor. Angel's evil self is shown both in flashbacks to his past and in a series of episodes in which he has temporarily been stripped of his soul and returns to his evil ways. The heroic Angel, however, rarely smiles, and his

eyebrows are knitted in an almost permanent frown. He dresses in dark clothing like our other heroes (vampires are apparently very concerned about fashion), usually wearing a long black coat that gives the effect of a cape. He has devoted his recent years to fighting supernatural evil in the form of other vampires and demons, in an attempt to make up for his decades of murder. He dispatches the bad guys with arrogant panache, allowing himself flickers of satisfaction before returning to his almost-perpetually serious and gloomy state of mind. In the episode "In the Dark," Angel comes by a magical ring that will allow him to be outside by daylight. Despite his feeling of awe and wonder at seeing the sun, he announces to his friend and colleague Doyle (Glenn Quinn), "I'm not going to wear the ring." Shocked, Doyle complains, "You got a real addiction to the brooding part of life." Angel explains, however, that he has to continue to bear the burden of his guilt:

> Angel: I've thought of it from every angle. What I figure is I did a lot of damage in my day--more than you can imagine.
>
> Doyle: What? You don't get the ring because your period of self-flagellation isn't over yet? Think of all the daytime people you could help between nine and five.
>
> Angel: They have help. The whole world is designed for them. So much that they have no idea what goes on around them after dark. They don't see the weak ones, lost in the night or the things that prey on them. And if I join them, maybe I'd stop seeing too. [. . .] I was brought back for a reason, Doyle. As much as I'd like to kid myself, I don't think it was for eighteen holes at Rancho.

He insists that his role is not to enjoy himself, but to continue to work for redemption—at night and in the dark. Angel is not only Byronic in his guilt, but also in his love for one who is perpetually inaccessible to him, the Slayer, Buffy. The two characters had a passionate affair but discovered the hidden clause in the gypsy curse: a moment of "perfect happiness" will strip Angel of his soul and turn him evil again. Thus, he must remain apart from his love, Buffy, in a state of perpetual longing. In a recent crossover episode ("Sanctuary"), Buffy (Sarah Michelle Gellar) tells Angel about her new boyfriend, Riley, and Angel angrily characterizes his own forced isolation: "You moved on. I can't. You found someone new. I'm not allowed to, remember? I see you again, it cuts me up inside, and the person I share that with is me." Angel is a favorite of many of my students, and, in fact, it was one of my students (Greg Arnold) who introduced me to the series by writing a paper about Angel as a Byronic hero, just as it was several students of mine who convinced me to read *The Sandman*. Thus, a mutually beneficial learning process ensues. My students' own expertise as "consumers" of popular culture contributes to my own understanding, and the work on popular culture some of them do in their own papers gives them an enhanced critical ability and a new tool with which to examine both nineteenth-century texts and their descendents from a complex critical perspective.

11. Like Gaiman, Angel's creators undermine his Byronic pose in a coyly self-referential fashion as much as they exploit it. In the episode, "The Yoko Factor," Buffy's new boyfriend Riley (Marc Blucas) worries that she isn't over her attraction to Angel, and comments on his appeal to women: "Even when he's good, he's all Mr.-Billowy-Coat-King-of-Pain, and girls really . . ." Here he's interrupted by Buffy, but he was clearly going to say something along the lines of "and girls really dig that type." Angel's creators don't allow his claims to heroism to be taken entirely seriously. "In the Dark" opens with Angel being mocked by his nemesis, Spike (James Marsters), a vampire companion from his evil past. Angel has just rescued a young woman from being killed by a drunken boyfriend, and Spike, watching from a rooftop, provides a sarcastic voiceover, presenting his own version of the dialog. He has the rescued woman ask, in the mode of a stereotypical damsel in distress, "How can I thank you, you mysterious black-clad hunk of a knight-thing?" and then has Angel reply in an exaggerated John-Wayne-like Western hero's vocal inflection: "No need little lady. Your tears of gratitude are enough for

me. You see, I was once a bad-ass vampire, but love, and a pesky curse, defanged me, and now I'm just a big fluffy puppy with bad teeth." Spike, like Gaiman's Mervyn, dismisses Angel's Byronic theatrics as a mere pose, a product of fashion, the affectation of "a great poof," and "nancy-boy hair gel."

12. Like Byron, contemporary creators of Byronic heroes realize that there is something comical as well as tragic about the brooding, self-absorbed loner. Discussions about contemporary Byronic heroes in class allow students to explore the longstanding and pervasive appeal of Byron's creations. Like popular culture scholar Henry Jenkins, my students and I can be fans of popular culture at the same time that we examine it from an academic perspective, and I believe that doing so enriches our experience of the texts under consideration.[1] The Byronic hero is a figure of autonomy, self-reliance, defiance, and power, and he is an outlaw who lives by his own moral code. I would argue that the appeal to the audience is the same in Byron's times and ours: Manfred and the heroes I've described here can successfully act on their desires to defy authority and can successfully confront obstacles in their path. They do not have to bow to institutional power or to oppressive forces, for they have both the supernatural abilities and the attitude required to fight them. At the same time, they validate their audience's own doubts and fears and sorrows. Many fans can relate to Eric and Dream and Angel's grief over the unattainability of perfect love. Many fans can relate to Lestat's perpetual questioning of his purpose in life. As fans we may envy Manfred and Q and Lestat and Angel's power, but we do not envy their boredom with their immortality and their perpetual gloom and isolation. Contemporary Byronic heroes, like Manfred, give us a vicarious experience of utter autonomy and power, but at the same time they suggest that in our powerlessness we may be better off and almost surely happier than they are. In Byron's *Manfred*, when the self-pitying hero is advised to seek patience by the Chamois Hunter who has prevented his suicide, Manfred haughtily and pompously responds,

> Patience and patience! Hence—that word was made
> For brutes of burthen not for birds of prey;
> Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
> I am not of thine order. (2.2.35-38)

Expressing his own relief as well as that of Byron's readers, the hunter exclaims "Thanks to Heaven! / I would not be of thine for the free fame / Of William Tell" (2.2.38-40). Byron here comically undermines Manfred's pretensions to superiority. In a similar fashion, Gaiman and *Angel*'s creators use the skepticism of characters like Mervyn and Spike, respectively, to strip off some of the glamour and luster of Dream and Angel's self-satisfaction in their own suffering. Resonances such as these suggest that the connections between Byron's heroes and the Byronic hero in contemporary culture seem to have an almost unlimited potential to be explored.

Works Cited

Beahm, George. "The Quotable Anne Rice." *The Unauthorized Anne Rice Companion*. Ed. George Beahm. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1996. 135-38.

Bender, Hy. *The Sandman Companion*. New York: Vertigo/DC Comics, 1999.

Gaiman, Neil. "Original Script of Calliope." *The Sandman: Dream Country*. New York: DC Comics, 1991.

Interview with the Vampire. Dir. Neil Jordan. Perf. Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt. Geffen Pictures, 1994.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York, London: Routledge, 1992.

---., and John Tulloch. *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Dr. Who and Star Trek*. New York, London: Routledge, 1995.

McGinley, Kathryn. "Development of the Byronic Vampire: Byron, Stoker, Rice." *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Eds. Gary Hoppenstand and Ray B. Browne. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. 71-90.

Rice, Anne. *The Vampire Lestat*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Roberts, Bette B. *Anne Rice*. New York: Twayne, 1994.

Notes

[1] See, in particular, Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*; Henry Jenkins and John Tulloch, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Dr. Who and Star Trek*.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

How to Save "Tintern Abbey" from New-Critical Pedagogy (in Three Minutes Fifty-Six Seconds)

Ted Underwood, Colby College

1. In this collection of essays, the pressing question raised by my title may not be "Why teach popular music?" but "Why with Wordsworth?" Almost any other Romantic writer makes more sense in this connection. Mary Shelley and Lord Byron not only contribute through their works to contemporary culture, but themselves appear as icons of the Romantic in works like *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *Arcadia*. Coleridge and Keats keep a lower contemporary profile, but are enveloped by an aura of opium and precocious death that makes it not altogether absurd to connect them to popular culture. Wordsworth, on the other hand, makes a point of his discomfort with a culture of "outrageous stimulation" (747). "Wordsworth and Rock 'n Roll" is a pairing guaranteed to highlight the risk involved in any juxtaposition of high and low culture in the classroom—which is, that it will seem simultaneously to vulgarize what ought to be pure and to intellectualize what ought to be gritty and authentic.

2. I sometimes do introduce contemporary culture in less embarrassing ways: film versions of *Frankenstein*, film versions of Austen. But I've focused here on the connection between popular music and Wordsworth because it's the one I find indispensable in the Romantic-period survey I teach every year. Film versions of novels can raise many interesting questions, but the questions they raise most insistently—about the different emphases of novelistic and filmic narrative—are tangential to my purpose in a period survey. Works of historical imagination like Stoppard's *Arcadia* or the various Byron-Shelley vampire stories, on the other hand, take "Romanticism" too directly as their subject.[1] In a senior seminar, it would be fascinating to discuss these authors' use of the R-word. But in the survey course, I want students' ideas about isms to coalesce only very slowly and tentatively from an acquaintance with specific works. I'm afraid that a consistent and vividly-colored caricature of "Romanticism" would prove more memorable than the inconsistency of the period itself.

3. Why, then, do I pair Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" with 80s and 90s rock? There are specific thematic and historical connections to be made, about which I'll say a word or two. But my real pedagogical agenda, I've come to realize, has less to do with those specific connections than it does with the fate of lyric—and perhaps especially of Wordsworthian lyric—in the classroom. I bring popular music into the period survey because I find that my students' definition of "the lyric" needs to be challenged and enlarged before they have much chance of perceiving anything lyrical about Wordsworth.

4. I teach students who have done well in high school, and know perfectly well what a lyric poem is. A lyric, as you may know, is a condensed literary form in which a single speaker explores a process of thought or feeling. It's less clear what you do with one once you recognize it. Because students read and discuss novels outside of class, they're comfortable asking questions based on their understanding of novelistic pleasure: Are the characters fully developed? Is the ending satisfying? Those questions can then lead to other, less obvious, questions. When they approach lyric poetry, students don't have the same base to start from, and so they're inclined to jump directly to the level of meaning, and beyond that, to the periodizing generalities they believe constitute "knowledge of literary history."

5. In my view, this hasty leap to periodization short-circuits the whole course. My own research is historical, and I certainly do want my students to think historically about poetry. But it's an enterprise

without much content if they don't yet understand the category of experience about which they are forming generalizations.

6. My sympathies are with the students in this matter. Like most of my students, and for that matter like most of my colleagues, I didn't grow up hearing poems read out loud. I encountered written poetry mainly in the classroom, while my emotional life was braided into and constituted by a different lyric form, called "the single." Under those circumstances, it's possible to come to the conclusion that you "like poetry," without connecting that liking closely to the identificatory surprise and sense of suspended volition you feel when reciting your favorite song lyrics. One learns to look to written poetry only for kinds of lyric expression that are rare in popular culture—involving absolute negative capability, for instance, and an unconsoled engagement with human mortality. This definition of poetry (which makes it, in effect, the inverse image of popular sentimentality) works well as an introduction to some poets—say, Rilke, Rimbaud, and Keats. But it's not an especially good approach to Wordsworth. In my case, real appreciation of Wordsworth didn't come until graduate school.

7. There's a good case to be made that this delay is inevitable—that Wordsworth's apparent innocence and actual complexity make it difficult for him to reach twenty-year-old readers on the first pass. I'm thinking of Peter J. Manning's essay "On Failing to Teach Wordsworth," which makes this case with a candor and an eloquence I admire. Manning points out that a pattern of cognitive failure, followed by delayed understanding, has a certain aptness here. If our students find Wordsworth's "spots of time" opaque and unmanageable the first time they encounter them, it shouldn't surprise us: so did Wordsworth. But this needn't, of course, limit our pedagogical aspirations. J. S. Mill was 22 when "the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time" appeared to him "an important event in my life" (149), and—Mill's famous precocity notwithstanding—other students the same age can have the same reaction.

8. Many of the barriers to appreciation lie in learned expectations about poetry that serve Wordsworth poorly. It will surprise no one to learn that the New-Critical approach to poetry that still dominates our classroom practice enshrines certain modernist preferences as general laws. In particular, as I have already hinted, New-Critical pedagogy defines written lyric poetry as an inverse image of popular sentimentality. A poem is a free-associative subspecies of the riddle; it rigorously avoids the paraphrasable. To appreciate it is to be able to explain the relevance of each apparent non-sequitur. Doing this reveals that you are capable of fresh and authentic experience, as distinguished from the stock responses we relegate to greeting-card verse and popular music.

9. To students who have passed through this program of modernist training, the best Wordsworthian lines ("and oh, / The difference to me") often look more like greeting-card verse than they do like poetry.[2] Wordsworth's lyrics lack the imagistic riddle-structure they have learned to expect in written poems; by contrast, they appear sentimental and didactic. One response to this obstacle would be to compromise, and to stress the sense in which Wordsworth's poems are, after all, riddles of a psychological kind. Another would be to launch a direct assault on modernism's expansion of negative capability into a law that there are "no ideas but in things" (Williams 6). Both these responses are cogent, but given the limited space of a twelve-week semester, it occurred to me that a pedagogical shortcut might be to remind students that they already in fact enjoy—and see a discussable complexity in—rhymed ballads that don't hesitate to comment on human experience directly. By bringing popular music into the classroom, I hoped to show students that the modernist standards they impose on written poetry are not universal, while reminding them that they already have a definition of the lyric that makes as much room for eloquence and identificatory pleasure as it does for riddle-solving.

10. This was a move that made particular sense to me because the music popular in my own college years was specifically Romantic. Kate Bush did the Brontës in several voices, Pink Floyd did the

"Immortality Ode,"

> When I was a child
> I caught a fleeting glimpse
> Out of the corner of my eye.
> I turned to look but it was gone
> I cannot put my finger on it now
> The child is grown,
> The dream is gone . . .

and Bono fell upon the thorns of life, bled, and became the trumpet of a prophecy so simultaneously political and personal that it must have made Shelley's scattered ashes blush.[3]

11. The trickiest part of actually teaching these connections, I find, is to avoid a rigidly comparative subordination of contemporary texts to the Romantics that would negate the whole point of the assignment. The first time I tried this sort of thing, it came at the end of the semester, as a kind of coda. I used Peter Gabriel, "Solsbury Hill" (1977) and U2, "Where the Streets Have no Name" (1985), and asked students to compare them to Wordsworth and Shelley, respectively. But in setting up discussion, I moved much too quickly, naively expecting that the song lyrics themselves would be reasonably transparent to the students, so that we would be able to skim over the usual groundwork of interpretation and move quickly into a comparison to Romantic texts they had already read. Of course, the lyrics weren't transparent; even when the themes are Romantic, rock lyrics often move according to an associative logic more difficult to decode than Wordsworth's double negatives. The students panicked and froze, and I felt even more desolate than I do when they fail to understand Romantic texts.

12. I was operating with the naïve assumption that popular culture is absorbed directly by the ears, and that only high culture has to be mediated through the analytic intelligence. In fact one can like a song for a long time without wondering what one likes, just as one can like "Kubla Khan" for a long time without wondering whether there are one or several speakers. This admittedly qualifies my original pedagogical rationale. I had reasoned that students already see the complexity in rock lyrics, and that it should only be necessary to connect popular culture to Romanticism in order to allow their existing proficiency in the lyric mode to spill over into the classroom. In fact, in both domains, it takes the same effort to move from uncritical to analytic appreciation. In spite of this, I think the connection remains worth making: after students are surprised by the difficulty of popular lyrics, they are much readier to believe that lyric poems can be apparently simple, actually difficult, and nevertheless enjoyable.

13. The practical lesson I took away from my mistake was essentially this: to get the effect I want out of teaching popular culture, I have to set things up so that students perceive the text as belonging to their domain of expertise. This doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be last year's hit; there is a canonicity in popular music that immunizes certain older songs against dismissive periodization. On the other hand, it does mean that I no longer present popular music at the end of the semester and ask students to look for Romantic themes. That has two bad effects: first, it reifies Romanticism, and second, it paralyzes students who don't yet have the historical confidence to articulate significant parallels. Instead I teach popular music *before* the Romantic text I plan to link it to, and I encourage students not to worry about the historical connection just yet. I warm up the discussion the same way I would warm up any other discussion—which is to say that I begin with the sorts of questions students are likely to ask themselves about the songs. Then I try to let those questions motivate a harder question about the meaning of some contemporary lyric convention. In the next class session, I read the Romantic text as a historical answer.

14. For instance, I recently taught Gabriel's "Solsbury Hill" (1977), Melissa Etheridge's "My Back Door" (1989), and Live's "Lightning Crashes" (1994) as a kind of introduction to "Tintern Abbey." One thing the three songs have in common with each other, and with Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism*, is a three-part pattern of connection, loss, and return to a (now transformed) connection. This is clearest in the Etheridge song, which is a straightforward narrative, tracing a union with the world that the speaker experiences as a child, loses, and rediscovers in the form of political commitment.

15. A similar pattern is implicit, but very confusing, in "Lightning Crashes." On the narrative level, that song recounts the death of a woman and the birth of a child in the same hospital. Something passes from the dying woman to the child; it might be "a motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things," or it might just be "the burden of the mystery." As the song puts it, "The confusion that was here / Belongs now to the baby down the hall." The song's choruses stand at a 90-degree angle to this action; it's not clear who the speaker is, but the lack of specificity suggests that the choruses are giving a lyrical interpretation of the action rather than participating in it:

> I can feel it coming back again
> Like the rollin' thunder chasing the wind
> Forces pulling from the centre of the Earth again
> I can feel it.

It's important to know that the whole song is a crescendo, and that the crescendo takes place most markedly during the two choruses. This, combined with the repetition of "I can feel it," tends to suggest that what's "coming back" is not just "life," but a renewed power to feel. But the song doesn't specify when or how that feeling was lost, and it does little to explain the connection between its celebration of subjective renewal and the cycle of life and death it describes. There's only the implied link between "lightning crashes" and "rolling thunder," which vaguely suggests that one kind of renewal follows on the other.

16. Discussion ended on this perplexity. The next day, we went on to "Tintern Abbey," discussing it entirely in its own right. It's a sufficiently perplexing poem on its own. But after we had wondered why anyone would enjoy "Flying from something that he dreads," unknitted the chronology, and recognized a familiar pattern of connection, loss, and connection in a different form, I was able to say some things about the Romantic secularization of redemption narrative that received (I think) a much more attentive hearing than they would have if the students hadn't seen that Wordsworth was in the process of inventing a lyric pattern they know well. I was then almost (but not quite) able to convince them that "Lightning Crashes" is able to be vague about the connection between its cycle of life and its cycle of subjective renewal because we have "Tintern Abbey" in our blood, and half-automatically infer that the point of perceiving a spirit (or a burden of "confusion") that rolls through all things is to rediscover a (now articulate and conscious) connection to that spirit.

17. As I say, I'm not entirely sure that the students in this particular class were willing to buy the notion that Romantic lyric forms live on, unseen, in the interpretive assumptions they bring to rock and roll. But this hardly matters. My pedagogical aim was not to get them to believe that proposition, or even to believe that rock's cycles of secular redemption are inherited from what Abrams calls "the Greater Romantic Lyric." Those were the subjects we discussed, but these class sessions contributed to the semester more importantly through their unstated presupposition: that popular music and "Tintern Abbey" can offer experiences of the same order of intensity.

18. To lead students to this realization, I continue to believe an indirect approach is best. I don't preface my introduction of popular music with any apology, attack on elitism, or baptism in cultural theory; my students would rightly be suspicious of a formal argument in favor of pleasures they already know. On

the other hand, prompted in part by our discussion in the Romantic Circles conference on this topic,[4] I am beginning to see ways this unit could logically lead *up to* a discussion of cultural theory. As I suggested at the beginning of this essay, the conjunction of Wordsworth and popular music is a strange one in part because Wordsworth himself so explicitly resists the dominant culture of his own time. By linking that culture to "the encreasing accumulation of men in cities," distinguishing it from authentically popular lyric expression, and identifying its chief defect as artificiality, Wordsworth articulates one of the earliest critiques of modern popular culture as "mass culture" (746).

19. It would make a great deal of sense, then, to move from a discussion of Wordsworthian patterns in popular music, to a discussion of Wordsworth's own embryonic theory of "mass culture." The next time I teach this material, I plan to save the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* for the class immediately after our discussion of "Tintern Abbey," and I may follow it with Adorno and Horkheimer on "The Culture Industry."

20. I would like students to become conscious of Romantic cultural theory so that they can resist its unexamined presence in their thinking. I don't myself make a distinction between authentic "popular culture" and "mass culture," and I'm unpersuaded by the firm distinctions that Wordsworth and Adorno erect. Though I agree that contemporary culture is shaped by market forces, and pervaded by ideology, I don't think this state of affairs is particularly new: culture was informed by power long before the invention of the record company or the gothic drama. We do need to distinguish more and less democratic means of cultural production. But the terms of a distinction between "popular" and "mass" culture often seem to me to encourage, not pragmatic reflection on specific institutions, but nostalgia for a lost Eden where individual consciousness and the culture of the group are supposed to have coincided without mediation by any institutions at all.[5] I doubt that it is either possible or desirable for culture to work that way, and for that reason I approach the popular/mass distinction skeptically.

21. I'm coming to see that it is nevertheless necessary to talk about this distinction in a Romantic-period survey, because a critical examination of the idea of popular authenticity, as it appears in the "Preface," brings our discussion of the lyric full circle. I want students to challenge modernist myths about written poetry: especially the idea that all poems aspire to be "palpable and mute / As a globed fruit" (MacLeish 141). Rejecting that narrow definition permits them to bring to Wordsworth an intensely identificatory reading strategy that they associate mainly with electronic media. But in doing this, I now realize, it is equally necessary to challenge a complementary myth: the notion that truly authentic or "popular" culture is a natural secretion of the social organism, and as such is received directly by our limbic system without political or intellectual mediation. That account would describe Percy's *Reliques* as poorly as it describes a compact disc. By using popular music to dislodge modernist idealizations of high culture, and a critical reading of Wordsworth to dislodge romantic (and late-Marxist) idealizations of popular authenticity, I hope to encourage a reading of lyric that is passionate and yet clear-eyed about the social underpinnings of culture.

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H. "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric." *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1984. 76-108.

Dickstein, Morris. "'The Very Culture of the Feelings': Wordsworth and Solitude." *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*. Ed. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1987. 315-43.

Holland, Tom. *Lord of the Dead*. New York: Pocket, 1997.

Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1991. 120-67.

Live. "Lightning Crashes." *Throwing Copper*. Uni/Radioactive: 1994.

MacLeish, Archibald. *The Human Season: Selected Poems 1926-1972*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Mandell, Laura. "Romanticism and Contemporary Culture: MOO Log." *Romantic Circles*. 1 February 2002. University of Maryland.
http://www.rc.umd.edu/villa/vc97/june00/transcriptfn.html

Manning, Peter J. "On Failing to Teach Wordsworth." *Approaches to Teaching Wordsworth's Poetry*. Ed. Spencer Hall with Jonathan Ramsey. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1986. 39-53.

Melley, Timothy. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000.

Mill, John Stuart. *Collected Works*. Ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger. Vol. 1. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981. 30 vols.

Percy, Thomas. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our Earlier Poets, Chiefly of the Lyric Kind*. London: J. Dodsley, 1765.

Pink Floyd. "Comfortably Numb." *The Wall*. Sony: 1979.

Powers, Tim. *The Stress of her Regard: A Novel*. New York: Ace, 1989.

Stein, Atara. "Achtung Emily." E-mail to the author. 13 October 1998.

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993.

Williams, William Carlos. *Paterson*. New York: New Directions, 1992.

Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797-1800*. Ed. James Butler and Karen Green. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.

Notes

[1] In addition to Stoppard, see Powers, *The Stress of her Regard: A Novel* and Holland, *Lord of the Dead*.

[2] Morris Dickstein gives an excellent reading of this line's simplicity and difficulty in "'The Very Culture of the Feelings': Wordsworth and Solitude."

[3] Atara Stein's "Achtung Emily," a compilation of interlaced excerpts from U2's *Achtung Baby* and Shelley's "Epipsychidion," helped me realize how very close the comparison is.

[4] Especially Laura Mandell's comments from the MOO discussion in the Villa Diodati.

[5] My skepticism here is analogous to Timothy Melley's skepticism about the contemporary conspiracy-theory thriller. Conspiracy theory, in Melley's view, can usefully draw our attention to the monopolization of power and knowledge by elites. But when it stages a sharply-drawn distinction between "individual agency" and

"controlling organizations," it also promulgates a misleading fantasy of absolute autonomy (7-16). I would propose that the concept of "mass culture" itself is useful, and misleading, in these same ways.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

The Picturesque and the Kodak Moment

Ron Broglio, Georgia Tech

1. Technology informs the construction of subjectivity. In Gilpin's reference to the camera obscura, human sight takes as its model mechanical projection: "The imagination becomes a camera obscura, only with this difference, that the camera represents objects as they really are; while the imagination, impressed with the most beautiful scenes, and chastened by rules of art, forms its pictures, not from the most admirable parts of nature; but in the best taste" (*Three Essays* 52). As Martin Jay has points out in *Downcast Eyes*, sight is a privileged epistemological tool . Our way of seeing and thinking about the world around us is informed by the camera obscura and its historical derivative, the camera. These machines define the position of the interiorized observer to the outside world (Crary Chapter 2). By setting landscape aesthetics next to the aesthetics of Kodak, I want students to explore how the camera works in relation to the picturesque. My hope is that they discover some basic assumptions about how observers in the 19th century and the present represent their relationship to the world. The dominant way of seeing both then and now is what Jay calls "Cartesian perspectivalism," a method of perception that represents space and the subjects and objects in that space according to the rules of Euclidean geometry. Developing the historical relationship between optics, the picturesque, and the camera de-naturalizes the Cartesian scopic regime. By disturbing the relationship between sight and truth, including the picture as a true representation and tour guides as accurate documents of places, students can begin thinking of other modes of representing place and experience.

2. In my "Optics and Aesthetics" course, during the first half of the semester I work with students to help them understand Cartesian perspectivalism. The class reads sections of Descartes's *Optics* with Jonathan Crary's commentaries from *Techniques of the Observer*, then turns to Burke, Gilpin, and various Romantic works that incorporate the picturesque. As a mid-term project, students compare and contrast the picturesque with Kodak's web site on how to take pictures. They then go into the field and take "picturesque" snapshots according to the guidelines set out by Kodak and by the picturesque aesthetic. They put these photos online with commentaries on each and with links to passages from authors we have studied. The second half of the semester is spent working on a phenomenological critique of the way of seeing established in the first half of the course. In class, we look at how new media, particularly the web and MOO, reconfigures our representations of space. As a final project, students add to their picturesque web site other decidedly non-picturesque photos of the same spot with an eye toward other ways of providing a "feel" for the place. Additionally, we discuss web page designs and site architecture that facilitate their non-picturesque representations.

3. Using the web and MOO to discuss landscapes adds a new dimension to understanding representation of place. I ask students to take snapshots of a place and then have them use the photos in a group of web pages designed to represent that space. Having students build web pages that in their form suggest the ideas from the content of their argument leads students to engage the problem of constructing representational spaces. The images, font, background color, links and word choice all become part of their attempt to convey the "genius of the place." As students produce their own representation or "virtual guide" to a place, they begin to ask different questions about the authors we've studied. To represent place they must model their writing according to the abstract discourse of Gilpin or the intimate journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, or they may use both discourses and set them against each other in a series of web pages. As they construct image and text in their sites, they look at the way Gilpin uses illustrations in his tour guide, and they reconsider Constable's letters about his paintings.

4. Importantly, the words and images used as links between pages become a part of the argument since the reader is asked to construct the relationship between the two pages via the connecting link. In the logic of linking pages, what words and images should provide portals to other aspects of a landscape? The dizzying connections Wordsworth makes in his Snowdon passage from *The Prelude* invite students to think about how to link disparate elements in a landscape we half see and half create. In contrast, the methodical categories of Gilpin's and Wordsworth's tour guides provide other ways of moving through space. My hope is that through their own creative project, students will discover how the epistemologies that inform the landscape aesthetic of the Romantic period effect the way writers and artists of the period both saw and presented the land. By having students use cameras to capture images of the land they have chosen to represent, I am asking them to work within the same mechanical optics that dominated much of landscape aesthetics. Of course, as they place these images on web pages, the shift in representational medium allows students the possibility of breaking out of Cartesian perspectivalism as a model for mediation between viewer and object viewed.

5. In addition to web pages, students visit MOO rooms to develop a sense of space. (See student instructions.) The MOO is a non-space; that is, there is no "space" other than a screen with words and, perhaps, some images. Yet, depending on the words used to describe the MOO "room" students act differently in each place. After logging and discussing MOO landscapes in Villa Diodati, I ask students what verbal cues caused them to react the way they did to the space. The result is a discussion about the role of text and the role of imagination in creating space. Such a discussion enables them to see Romantic texts in a new light. The interaction in the MOO helps defamiliarize the act of reading landscape texts and allows for new interpretive strategies in reading. They begin asking what is the role of proper nouns that are embodied as objects in the MOO room? What is the movement of the narrator throught the space? What verbs predominate? What descriptive words caused me as a MOO character to act differently in the room than the narrator in the poem? Additionally, the MOO players see slight differences in the room, and each player acts on these differences through the MOO conversation. "Seeing" or reading and imagining differences provides a classroom discussion concerning what we assume about nature and how to act in nature. Some students treat the MOO room as a utopic nature place. Others treat the space with suspicion or even contempt, preferring a narrative poem with its familiar cues or finding a digital and textual representation of nature to be absurd. Such moments are important for understanding how mediation—be it paper or digital—effects representation of place and how any description creates a "virtual" world.

6. Often, students who consider themselves poor readers but quite skilled in computers (which includes a disproportionately large number of students at Georgia Tech where I teach) find themselves drawn into the problems of representing space as they begin playing with their hypertext documents. They debate on how to best represent the land and what discourse best represents their *experience* of interacting with the land. The overarching question becomes, "How can I make the land into a landscape and what price do I pay for such a representation?" While I have not tried this approach, such moments seem ripe for exploring issues laid out in Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" and treatments of nature developed by eco-criticism and Green Romanticism. Admittedly, a good deal of class time gets diverted from the study of Romantic texts, and the class's detailed reading of a select few texts leaves little time for a broad coverage of the period; however, I find the questions raised in class and the engagement of the students in their projects to be more important and more far reaching than I am able to accomplish with a wider range of the period texts.

7. While landscape aesthetics circa 1800 seems quite distant and inaccessible to most students, taking pictures with a disposable camera is rather commonplace. By allowing students to explore Romantic texts through a contemporary "lens," students find the texts more approachable. They have little problem talking about their experiences and their photography. Eventually this freedom of discussion transfers to their discussion of Romantic texts. Then, as I ask them to discuss their photos in relation to

the Romantic texts, the task seems less daunting. Kodak and landscapes are not a perfect fit—nor should they be. The differences are important for putting the two cultures and activities in context. For example, good taste is a cue for class and education in landscape aesthetics. Photography in the late 1800s had similar class, education, and gender distinctions, but by the 1900s this gradually fades, making photography simple and accessible to virtually everyone (West Chapter 2). I use Kodak and the picturesque as a starting place for beginning the conversation by which the students' culture and the Romantics' culture can speak to one another. In this conversation, students bring as much to the class with their opinions about photography and sense of place as I do in presenting them with Romantic texts. By the end of the semester, their sense of what a photo is and does gets placed within a much larger conceptual field of representation from landscapes of the 1800s to digital technology of 2000. Conversely, Romantic texts become for the students not simply historical moments of seeing but a vantage point to explore concerns over optical perceptions still vital to us today.

Notes

Bolter, Jay, and Richard Grusin. *Remediations*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999.

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. 1757. New York: Penguin, 1999.

Crarey, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1992.

Galassi, Peter. *Before Photography*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981.

Gilpin, William. *Observations on Cumberland and Westmoreland*. 1786. New York: Woodstock Books, 1996.

---. *Three Essays on the Picturesque*. 1792. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1983.

Gray, Thomas. *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*. Vol. 2 Ed. Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935.

Kodak Web Site. 27 Sept. 2000. <www.kodak.com.>

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Sense and Non-sense*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1964.

---. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1968.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. New York: Zone Books; Cambridge, MA: Distributed by MIT Press, 1997, 1991.

West, Nancy Martha. *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*. Charlottesville: UP Virginia, 2000.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Presentism vs. Archivalism in Research and the Classroom: Introduction

Laura Mandell, Miami University of Ohio

1. A discussion about presentism is appropriate for an issue of *Praxis* about the relation between Romantic-period writers and contemporary culture. Presentism can be defined as using present-day issues to understand history, and so literary historians who teach, think, and write referring to contemporary events are very much repeating the process—albeit in reverse—of recent novelists and film-makers who incorporate Romantic literature into their work.

2. We reprint here from an issue of *SubStance* David Simpson's "Is Literary History the History of Everything?: The Case for Antiquarian History"[1] as an example of an argument against presentism both in the classroom and in research. In the classroom, we are all presentists, as Simpson admits. Surely every Romanticist has mentioned at least one current event in relation to Romantic literature when teaching it, and certainly every research project, as Simpson again admits, has present motivations if not explicitly articulated connections with current events. But the worry about presentism that, in my view, we all share, voiced here especially well by David Simpson, is of rampant subjectivism. Here "subjectivism" isn't meant in its rigorous sense, "having to do with subjects," but in the common-sense, popular meaning, as in the phrase "purely subjective"—i.e., "purely personal." Projection of oneself onto the past is bad not just ideologically but emotionally as well, and I think many of us tacitly share the desire that the many students we deal with, just briefly (in terms of their lives), learn at the least from their encounter with past literatures that something truly other-than-oneself exists, and that information about this different person or scene is indeed worth discovering. If more students could discover that Wordsworth does *not* feel about things just the same way they do, nor just the opposite, they will have successfully learned techniques for truly encountering others beyond the mere denial and repudiation of difference through which they fictionalize friends, enemies, and lovers. Simpson states this view eloquently: "the university ought to provide," he says, echoing all our hopes, "the experience of challenge and difference" (7).

3. But relative agreement ends, perhaps, once we finish discussing pedagogy and move on to research. Simpson's argument about the relation between presentism and research is complex because, as postmodernists, we have a very complicated relationship to the notion of objectivity. On the one hand, we see ourselves as inevitably personalizing history,[2] while on the other, historians avoid anachronism in order to certify that they are understanding the past in its own terms.[3] As Henry Abelove put it in an oral presentation, discussing the abuses of queer theory in eighteenth-century studies, "When I hear the term 'homophobia' [applied to eighteenth-century structures of feeling], all my critical tools dissolve." Of course: without the existence of "homosexuality" as such during the eighteenth century (Halperin 111), how can there be what we know as "homophobia"? *Fears* may be felt and articulated, but they won't be organized in the same ways as ours, and knowing the difference is crucial to understanding the past.

4. The essays collected here, by Jerome McGann, Phillip Barrish, Gregory Tomso, and Jon Klancher—as well as a brief summary, included in this introduction, of Alan Liu's forthcoming book—have been gathered together as a response to Simpson's "Is Literary History the History of Everything?" for a particular reason. They respond to Simpson sympathetically in the sense that they are trying to eschew what Barrish calls "blithe" or "naive presentism"—simply applying "homophobia" to past articulations

of fear. It is precisely this naive presentism that Simpson justly attacks as an uncritical use of the past in present political battles. But the articles and summary collected here also attempt to account theoretically for the lived experience of Romanticists, connecting that experience to their research and teaching in contrast to Simpson who seems partly to wish to negate that connection. They use "presentism" as a method.

5. In "Reading Queerly," Tomso looks at contemporary homophobic rhetoric about AIDS in relation to very alien (to us) figurations of illness in 19th-century American novels: he doesn't simply find homophobia in those figurations, but rather attempts to determine how discourses on illness enter into a genealogy of homophobic rhetoric.

6. In his article presenting the theoretical orientation of his forthcoming book, Phillip Barrish connects the presentist method to anachronistic stagings of Shakespeare, quoting Jonathan Miller's defense of such a practice: since "every dramatic work 'must necessarily undergo change with the passage of time, . . . this change is best inflicted upon the work deliberately rather than, as it were, by default.'" Barrish connects Edith Wharton's "Autre Temps," an argument against sexism, to a reading of *Hopwood v. Texas*, the case that recently abolished affirmative action at the University of Texas. Again, he does not blithely or naively say that discrimination based on gender and marital status of the 19th century is just like racial discrimination at the end of the 20th. Instead of making this simple analogy, Barrish posits a catechretic relationship between the two discriminations and two historical periods, showing how each reveals what is difficult or impossible to say about the other.

7. Klancher responds to Simpson's critique of cultural criticism as it appears in this essay, a critique articulated fully in *The Academic Postmodern* (1995). Just as students see only themselves or an enemy in historically-distant writings, cultural-studies critics, Simpson believes, put history into "parodic or reductive form," rendering it a mythic or Imaginary antagonist: "orientalism, sexism, homophobia, Eurocentrism, and so on" (6). Klancher argues against Simpson that the "second-hand or transcribed" history of literary and cultural critics "isn't parodic," as Simpson maintains; rather it is, Klancher says, "just misconceived": bad cultural criticism evinces "a will only to use history and not to hear it."

8. A prime example of such "instrumental historicism," in Klancher's terms, are readings that rely on an important early essay by Alan Richardson. Sometimes critcs will use "colonization of the feminine" to read a passage written by a high Romantic poet in lieu of asking what's going on in that passage. In their view, Richardson's various readings have "proven" that high Romantic writers colonize the feminine, and so present-day critics use that "fact" as a key for reading rather than asking what's going on with the feminine imagery deployed in a specific passage written and published at specific times. Richardson himself never used his own concept in that way: each text he adduces as an example is shown to be colonizing; he doesn't find colonization once and then read every text as if we could presume its engagement in that project. We can't presume sexism; there might even be misogynist moments conjoined with feminism in high Romantic poetry, and, if so, we want to know what they are about. For Klancher, literary critics must be prepared "to hear a message from the past they didn't anticipate or wish to hear": one must resist, he says "a determination to keep history enlisted in one's own campaign as if it never could offer anything with which to instruct the campaign itself."

9. If one can enlist the past in order to better understand the present, one can also enlist the present to understand the past. McGann's Ivanhoe Game, discussed in detail in his *Radiant Textuality* and in essays and examples available on line,[4] makes use of the Internet (email) in order to fully educe the "transmissional possibilities" of a printed text, *Ivanhoe*. *Radiant Textuality*, excerpted in this issue of *Praxis*, theorizes how "deformative" reading made possible by debunking the canon and adopting deconstructive reading practices works in conjunction with digital media. We need to ask, McGann says in the Preface reproduced here, "[h]ow [computers] can be made to operate in a world that

functions through . . . ambiguities and incommensurables" — how, that is, computer "tools [might] improve the ways we explore and explain aesthetic works . . . ." The essays included in this forthcoming book show that McGann sees hypertext as, to use Sherry Turkle's term, an "evocative object" (17), one that allows us to see what is otherwise invisible since they bring to light messages encoded in traditional media, no matter what their surface content. As McGann has said, what hypertexts make clear about any text — texts in codex form, for instance — is that they should "not [be] primarily understood as containers or even vehicles of meaning. Rather, they are sets of instantiated rules and algorithms for generating and controlling themselves and for constructing further transmissional possibilities."[5]

10. As I show in greater detail elsewhere,[6] Alan Liu's method for resisting the projective reduction of history in all its forms similarly involves bringing past and present into conversation with each other. In his forthcoming book, *The Laws of Cool*, part of which has been previously published,[7] Liu examines how history is understood (and used) by present management theorists prominent in the business of knowledge work. Often the past becomes nothing more than "obsolete" in technological discourse.[8] That history is for these business theorists either the same as the present or outmoded is especially visible in one of the examples Liu adduces in *The Laws of Cool*, a book by Alan Axelrod titled *Elizabeth I CEO*: "The indifference of (and ultimately to) history here," Liu says, ". . . is sublime."

11. But Liu resists turning these business theorists, and our present, into a demonic Other. Instead, he demands that academics undertake a "serious engagement with the full intellectual force of business in its new persona as knowledge work" ("Knowledge Work" 118). In the first stage of a dialectical movement from present to past and past to present, Liu uses archaism to resist the reduction of the activity of business to mere profiteering, a Manichaean other to academic life: "the single most influential contemporary vision of the 'one life' and imagination (as the Romantics called it)" is provided by "a management guru," Peter Senge ("Knowledge Work," 119). Then Liu deploys anachronism. Instead of treating the past as events, he treats it as technique: the French Revolution was, Liu says anachronistically, a "restructuring event." Information Society's narrative of History as obsolescence insists that there was no technology, or only a less adequate one, and now technological progress triumphs. Axelrod's fantasy about Elizabeth I, that she was just a good CEO, feeds into that narrative: history is either really the same as now or unimportant, lesser. But unlike Axelrod, Liu doesn't see the technology used by the French revolutionaries as *the same* as that used in corporate takeovers. Revisiting the past in order to compare past and present technologies, without seeing the past as lesser or the same, disrupts the narrative of technological progress. The trick lies in resisting the sheer archaism of seeing the past only for the sake of its impact on present technique ("Napoleon I, Global Competitor"). In his book, Liu asks, "what's the difference between past and present revolutions in management?" and "what is at stake in knowing that difference?" His book argues that knowing history can give present-day knowledge workers critical purchase on the pressures for conformity within global corporate culture.[9]

12. The dialectic of anachronism and archaism visible as a deliberate methodology in Liu's work, I would suggest, necessarily appears in all historical work, most often unconsciously suffered rather than consciously deployed by the literary historian. The essays included in this section all try to make that dialectic conscious in various ways. All of them can help us think better about how to convince our contemporaries that the work of literary historians is vitally important to present-day life.

Works Cited

Abelove, Henry. Oral Presentation for the *American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*. Notre Dame

University, 2 April 1998.

Christensen, Jerome. *Romanticism at the End of History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000.

Halperin, David. "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6.1 (2000): 87-123.

LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Memory After Auschwitz*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998.

Liu, Alan. "Knowledge in the Age of Knowledge Work." *Profession 1999* 113-24.

---. *The Laws of Cool*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, forthcoming.

---. "The Tribe of Cool: Information, Culture and History." Webcast of Closing Keynote. ACH / ALLC 2001—New York University. 16 June 2001. 11 December 2001. http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ach_allc2001/webcast.html

McGann, Jerome. *Radiant Textuality: Literature After the World Wide Web*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Richardson, Alan. "Romanticism and the Colonization of the Feminine." In *Romanticism and Feminism*. Ed. Anne K. Mellor. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988. 13-25.

Simpson, David. "Is Literary History the History of Everything?: The Case for Antiquarian History." *SubStance* 88 (1999): 5-16.

Turkle, Sherry. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Notes

[1] Originally printed in *SubStance* 88 (1999): 5-16. An online version is included with this Praxis volume.

[2] See, for instance, LaCapra 180-210.

[3] On "the anachronism test," see Christensen 207-8, n. 5.

[4] For more information, see "Jerome McGann's Online Projects."

[5] This sentence is quoted from an earlier version of that Preface.

[6] See note 9.

[7] See "Knowledge Work" and "The Tribe of Cool."

[8] E-mail to NASSR-L. 9 January 1998.

[9] This is the subject of a review essay of Liu's *The Laws of Cool*, titled "Taking History's Part: Objectivity and the Romantic Historian," currently in manuscript.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Is Literary History the History of Everything? The Case for "Antiquarian" History[*]

David Simpson, University of California, Davis

1. YES INDEED, IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN, and is perhaps now more so than ever. For the most part our approach has been compulsively inclusive; nothing human or inhuman is alien to us. As a matter of moral and/or professional impulse, scholars and teachers of literature have always wanted to read a world through a text and in a text, even if some have insisted that such is not their business. Efforts at limiting the scope of our professional attentions, whether by textual editors, by deconstruction with its formal-linguistic "rigor," or by the New Criticism, have always been resisted as pure definitions of the discipline, and have survived principally by being allowed into the company of other and wider-ranging interpretive conventions, as parts of an ever-expanding whole. Old fashioned, restricted literary history conceived as the influence of one writer upon another has lately flourished most visibly in the form of polemical pastiche, in the work of Harold Bloom, rather than as an agreed-upon norm for the present conduct of criticism. Intellectually and philosophically, with or without moral impulse, there seems to be next to nothing that can be safely excluded in an *a priori* way from the historicization of a literary work. The dazzling, unforseen connections of the best of the "new historicism" merely carry to the max a principle of all literary history.

2. But then, if literary history is the history of everything, is it definable as a specific occupation, different from the rest of history? If so, how? And if not, what are the professional consequences of dissolving the figment of disciplinary identity into an undifferentiated method applying to all historical inquiry and perhaps all inquiry whatsoever?

3. This is a question particularly pressing within an academic culture marked by what we might call a "new general method" in the humanities and social sciences. This I take to involve an acceptance by other disciplines (history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology) of the practices (deliberately not "methods") of literary criticism. Everything now is described as storytelling, as local knowledge, as conversational, and as reflexive and even autobiographical.[1] Sometimes the project of attending to the past is completely supplanted by the literary critic's urge to tell us about him or herself: hence the current spate of autobiographies by academics who lead, for the most part, alas, not very interesting lives. At other times there is a wholesale retreat into the past as if it were the present—the diary, the conversation, the dense empirical field, the illusion of "being there." Thus we have either no history at all or the image (it is only ever that) of total history: history as full presence, and thus no longer history.

4. Many of us still work somewhere in between, with all the problems thereby entailed. But there is a perceptible drift away from engaging those problems. The appeal of cultural studies is partly to be explained by its veneer of *relevance*; it seems to be about the here and now, and about the experience of everyone and not just that of the devotees of a high literacy based in the reading of complex written texts. But the "presentism" that now dominates the current version of cultural studies (very different from the early prototypes of Raymond Williams; perhaps more like that of the Birmingham School) is also a relief from history, and from the very real problems of doing history. Leavened by the familiar postmodern notion of the end of history (in the liberal version) or its redundancy for a new global culture of spatial simultaneity (in the more common leftist-anarchist version), much of cultural studies has no need for history, which tends to appear, if it appears at all, in parodic or reductive form as a history of some uncontested hegemony (orientalism, sexism, homophobia, Eurocentrism, and so on) which it is the critic's task to expunge from the present by the fierce light of radical intelligence.

5. All of us, then, who worry about the tasks required of literary history are by definition, in the present academic culture of the United States at least, to be counted among the old farts. My aim here is not to offer a brave new way forward for literary history, Indeed, I currently believe that the project is characterized by an insoluble antinomy. Instead, I will try to remind us of the labors of doing literary history before they are forgotten completely in the drive toward presentist affirmation that may be our inevitable professional profile as we respond to a decline in high-cultural capital and political-financial resources. This reminder will probably not then have the effect of inspiring any new directions. But I hope it will serve as an example of the continuing value of certain sorts of skepticism and inconclusiveness; homage not to the ineffable complexities of literature itself (we've had plenty of that, though it is still at times useful to hear it again), but to the very describable difficulties of thinking of literature as historical.

6. These difficulties are not to be solved or avoided by invoking the hitherto least controversial sorts of historical formations: publishing histories, textual variants, genres and rhyme schemes, writerly influences. But neither are such topics to be ignored. Indeed, they may be more useful than ever for a generation of students more resistant than before (often for reasons beyond their control) to the experience and cultivation of patience. The slow accumulation of apparently uncontingent information —that is, information whose contingency is not immediately evident—is not to be dismissed. It is this more than anything that gives us, if it can be had at all, a sense of the past as past. To do this work, and to do it well, is much. And it is the source of whatever basic training we are going to give or get in formal and historical skills and vocabularies, and in the analysis of complex documents. These talents as taught to undergraduates are, moreover, still very marketable in the very employment sectors we tend to blame for the current demise of traditional literary studies, and to fail to teach them is to disadvantage our students in these quotidian ways as much as it is to rob them of the experience of challenge and difference that the university ought, in my view, to provide.

7. This retrieval of information not instantly validated by presentist urgencies may seem to belong to what Nietzsche called "antiquarian" history: the indiscriminate preservation of everything just because it is old (73-74). We should not feel it that way, however, because nothing can be deemed, in an *a priori* way, irrelevant to some context or other for literature, whether in its mechanical production or in its referential aura. So we have to gather it in just in case, like Boswell recording every item he could find about and around Samuel Johnson, knowing that what seemed trivial to him might seem important to someone else. This process is indefinite, whether we organize it by moving out from the meanings and allusions of writing, or by way of an account of the material and cultural situations impinging upon writing (editions, reading publics, social affiliations, and so forth).

8. We think of these kinds of history as relatively stable, because we can latch on to some relatively uncontroversial facts once in a while, and because such facts are so much more precise than the other kind of history we try to write, that of the subject, the "author." Their apparent precision allowed Gustave Lanson, in an essay recently translated, to believe in apprehending "the past in the past—and as the past," in a way uncontaminated by what he calls "subjective criticism" (224-25). If we are not engaged in evaluating the relation of past literature to ourselves, nor in describing individual writers or writings in terms other than those of "social configurations" and "collective life" (228, 234), then we can hope for an objective sociological method.

9. It is easy to query this position from within a contemporary orthodoxy that understands *all* history, no matter how minute, as motivated history. It may, for example, be indisputable that the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1798 and cost 5 shillings. But what we make of this item of information is still motivated by an interest in making a certain sort of sense rather than another (the price of the book was, after all, deemed uninteresting to generations of readers and critics). At the same time, we cannot claim that it actually cost 12 shillings, without indulging in perversity. And so, it

seems, Lanson is right. This is the past in the past, and as the past. What we make of the information is subject to all the familiar hermeneutic conundra, but the accumulation of this kind of basic information should not, it seems, cause us to worry overmuch.

10. Or should it? Lanson describes literary history as operating below the level of "laws and generalizations," content with the "preparation of facts and particular relations" (225). But at what point does the one turn into the other? There is no simple answer. I am not going to suggest that *Lyrical Ballads* did not cost 5 shillings. Nor that there are not other indisputable items of a similar nature—the size of the print run, of the advance, the nature of the contract, the format of the volume, and so forth. But we run out of these relatively soon. (All the more reason why we should hang on to them.) Alas, even apparently uncontroversial details can be deceptive: that is why there is a tradition of forgery, and why forgery can always be attributed even when it has not occurred. In other words, if there is a powerful motive for misrepresentation, nothing is out of bounds.

11. Following on from this, we might say that the credibility of a supposed historical fact increases in direct proportion to its perceived irrelevance, its standing outside any apparent field of motivation. In its literary form this is analogous to the realism effect, the technique of *vraisemblance*: it is the irrelevance of certain items in a story to its narrative that communicates the effect of the real: why would they be described at all if they were not "true"? Thus you believe me when I say that *Lyrical Ballads* cost 5 shillings, because you can find no motive for my not telling the simple truth. But I could be fooling you. Or I could have made a mistake, thus inadvertently repositioning the volume in its economic field. Time and again, we critics rely on the authority of other people's facts as the raw material for our interpretations, because we cannot imagine that they could be lying, or that they made a mistake. There are not that many lies in the relatively unimportant sphere of literary history, though there have been some.[2] But there are a lot of mistakes, enough to suggest that the division of labor proposed by Lanson cannot be relied upon by careful literary historians. If the goal of this kind of historical inquiry is absolute knowledge (absolute because the terms are very simple and limited—like the cost of a book), then everything has to be checked again and again. (Textual editors are used to the reproduction of mistakes in successive editions, each taking its predecessor as its source). My point: that the simplest level of historical information takes a lot of work to verify, even before we ponder its significance. Mostly we trust each other. But then we are back in the realm of consensual, constructed knowledge based in guild solidarity. As soon as we realize this, then we have left the comforting rhetoric of indisputable information for a life of constant vigilance. And, again: the most secure knowledge may be the most useless, its security dependent on its uselessness.

12. Lanson, we remember, guaranteed his kind of literary history by avoiding "subjective criticism." By this he meant the presentist evaluation of writing as good or bad, enlightening or not, in the eyes of whoever is reading. But he was also avoiding, by implication, the subject who is the writer, the human being from and through whom writing occurred in the past. This person can be talked about insofar as s/he is symptomatic of a communal tendency, a sociology. But not otherwise. Roland Barthes made this clear, again, in 1960: "history will never tell us what is happening inside an author at the moment he is writing" (156). Thus "literary history is possible only if it becomes sociological, if it is concerned with activities and institutions, not with individuals" (161). Notwithstanding the efforts of a number of theorists to dissolve this individual *into* activities and institutions—efforts we refer to with false affirmation as the "death" of the subject—Barthes's point remains the critical point. (The subject was never dead, only asleep.)

13. Literary works and individuals can only ever be related by adverting to some or other psychology or sociology. Each may carry some conviction, but it cannot be absolute and cannot contain that "excess" of literature that is the product of untraceable motivations. The psychological approach, Barthes proposes, substitutes the critic-analyst's motives for those of the subject, and produces only false

coherence and hypothesis; hence, we might add, the unwieldy pseudo-comprehensiveness of Sartre's account of Flaubert in *The Family Idiot*. The sociological approach, correspondingly, will produce a different sort of coherence, but it will not be that of literature, but of the discipline of history (itself now controversial in literary ways); hence, perhaps, the Baudelaire who emerges from Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* as, necessarily, incomplete, available only in pieces.

14. Barthes concludes by pointing out the inevitability of frustration for any literary history that seeks to describe literature: literature *is* the institutional form *for* subjectivity, and subjectivity is itself defined as indescribable, as the space of freedom within a culture tending otherwise to containment. As an incoherent assemblage of biological and cultural energies, each open to indefinite mutual recombinations or failed combinations that can register at various points on the scale from general experience to complete idiosyncrasy, the "subject" can never be apprehended, however often it is interpellated and in whatever terms (language, desire, class, gender and so on). Criticism, when it has not allowed itself to believe in the dissolution of the subject, has made major efforts to track it down, but the goal of absolute knowledge is always betrayed both by the antinomian nature of the subject described and by that of the subject doing the describing. Coherence and new sense often come, indeed, from a conjunction of the one with the other, so that a strongly motivated present interest "discovers" (with all the questions thus raised) a new motivation in or context for past writing.[3]

15. But we are always engaged with the part and not the whole.

16. Literary history, then, has to be the history of everything and in this way risks being the history of nothing. It tends toward that condition described by Nietzsche: "a man who wanted to feel historically through and through would be like one forcibly deprived of sleep, or an animal that had to live only by rumination and ever repeated rumination" (62). The "facts" that we do have in our projects thus function both as items for good faith interpretation and as sleeping pills, sources of temporary release from the nightmare of total recall, life without forgetting. Along with the "antiquarian" history that preserves everything for its own sake, and the "monumental" history that produces a simplified series of exemplary moments (for us this usually means "great books"), Nietzsche identifies a "critical" history that functions by destroying and forgetting pieces of the past and in this way allowing life to go on (75-76).

17. This critical history is the most familiar to us now and the most frequently validated; it is what licenses our *use* of the past as raw material for the present. But it is also what "destroys," being "always unmerciful, always unjust" (76). This critical history is what fuels our attributions and assumptions of monolithic inheritances and simplified traditions, all the negative "isms" whose displacement is our current work in the academy. As such, it is no less reifying than monumental history, and shares with it the tendency to level everything to the same standard. The fight between the "great books" defenders and the "political" critics is often one between equals and opposites, the one faction believing in eternal standards of excellence and the other in historically uniform expressions of culpability. Both, perhaps, need a good dose of antiquarian history: an excess of unassimilated information.

18. But our professional situation is, as I have said, not conducive to the sorts of patience required for the assimilation of such information. The culture of postmodern presentism that makes the past itself dubiously relevant is also anti-theoretical, in the extended sense of theory, the exploration of which requires similar reserves of space, time and disinterest to those called for by the antiquarian archive with which, indeed, such theory must be intimately involved. Add to this the professional urgency felt by a sector of the academy (literary studies) that is only insecurely hegemonic—that is, omnipresent in the new general method *within* the humanities sector of the universities, but under sustained inspection and even attack both from without and within precisely for the presentism I have been describing—and you do not have a climate for the sustained and inevitably slow growth of a new literary history,

especially one characterized by the apparent methodological dead ends I have also been describing.

19. To resurrect such visibly non-conclusive knowledge as the goal of higher education would be hard going indeed in an age of accountability, though it can perhaps be supplied with its own kind of charisma that we would be ill-advised to ignore and have hardly begun to explore. (Veblen opined a hundred years ago that the appeal of professional humanities study lay precisely in its uselessness, and thus in its availability for the arbitrary signification of excess wealth and leisure.[4] We would probably now have to do better than this, by arguing, for example, for the uses of inconclusive and nonapplied knowledge, as I.A. Richards and others have done.)

20. What kinds of literary history can we then expect, if any, and what have we recently had? The spate of textual editing generated by the "boom" years will likely slow down, and already threatens to do so. Biography, as a profitable sector of the book market affording the pleasures of coexistence with the great and the good, will likely survive. But high-level literary history has not been a flourishing genre. In 1970, Hans Robert Jauss noted the decline of the grand-narrative style of literary history, with its roots in nation-state formation and justification and its confidence in the power of literature to represent those forces.[5] This is quite reasonably deemed unsuited to our present age, with its commitment to deconstructing the nation and resurrecting those voices silenced by myths of national destiny. (Our grand narratives are thus those of negation.)

21. We have of course had the "new historicism," of which much has been written in praise and blame. More neutrally, its inevitability, or at least its symptomatic status for a generation generally hostile to history itself, should be recognized. New historicists have been noticed for their eschewal of grand theory and their alternative reliance upon anecdote and happenstance; for their immersion in the empirical plenitude of antiquarian history, from which items are plucked like rabbits from a hat, which turn out to illuminate a more traditionally "major" text or topic; and for their general effacement of hermeneutic problems about doing history in favor of the sheer vividness of the data *of* history. Nietzsche hoped for just such a history, one whose value would not lie in "general propositions" but in its "taking a familiar, perhaps commonplace theme, an everyday melody, and composing inspired variations on it, enhancing it, elevating it to a comprehensible symbol, and thus disclosing in the original theme a whole world of profundity, power and beauty" (92). William James remarked also the "innumerable little hangings-together of the world's parts within the larger hangings-together" and made them typical of the way the world works (64).

22. It is within this climate of expectation, wherein grand narrative is morally discredited and (perhaps more important) massively difficult to perform, that the anecdote and the contingent connection do their work.[6] Levi-Strauss wrote of biography and anecdote as "low-powered history," requiring subsumption within a "form of history of a higher power" for significant intelligibility. But he also noted that while low-powered history is the least explanatory, it is "the richest in point of information, for it considers individuals in their particularity and details for each of them the shades of character, the twists and turns of their motives, the phases of their deliberations" (261). Low-powered history—a very "literary" history in that it is like literature itself—has been the preferred history of recent years. So that the emphasis in recent literary history has been on the *literary* and not the history. Could it have been otherwise? Should it have been otherwise? Opinions have varied and will vary, according to the degree to which they preserve an anachronistic faith in the totalizing project of a single history as outlined by Sartre and by the European Marxist tradition, whereby low-powered history must always move to a higher power, or as they believe that low-powered history is all we can hope for in an age for which history in general is anathema—for a variety of persons and for a variety of reasons. It may be that those of us who want a history at all, of any kind, are hopelessly remote from the minds of the new generation: old farts one and all, Marxist or new historicist. But in this little spot of earth that is the

research university, we still have space and time, for the time being, to think about these things, and to argue about them as if our conclusions had serious consequences. Perhaps they do. I hope so.

23. We want a history: we—some of us—desire one, whether for the legitimation of our efforts within a narrative of progress or at least of coherence; or for the temporary release from present pressures in the contemplation of a past shorn of all its discomforts; or from a strangely subjective and therefore ultimately indescribable fellow-feeling for those long-dead who left us their writings, the most concentrated form of what we, too, try in our low-powered way to perform. So we want a history in that other sense: we lack one, as everyone does, and thus we have before us a space for infinite composition and endless mediation and meditation (and perhaps, even now, for professional accreditation and advancement).

24. There are many literary histories, with innumerable foundations, all shaky in the ways I began by describing, but all indispensable to us, insofar as we remain traditional scholars and critics. Whether they matter to others, I'm not sure, so I predict uncertain futures. But it may be that the most trivial and least accountable motive for wanting history, that pertaining to ancestor-worship (in its desacralized but not always diminished forms) and to the authorization of one's present situation, has not disappeared. I was surprised to see that, in the legal debate surrounding the passing and subsequent suspension of Amendment 2 to the constitution of the state of Colorado (a measure singling out gay and lesbian persons as not covered by certain protective clauses—the definitions themselves were hotly contested and unclear), there erupted a passionate exchange, complete with expert witnesses, about what Plato did and did not say about homosexual love. In other words, the cultural capital of Plato and ancient Greece still counted for something, even if opportunistically, in the clarification of a present condition.

25. Most of us scholars and critics, I suspect, do not fully know why we are preoccupied with the past, and thus with literary history. The aptness of Stephen Greenblatt's famous identification of a "desire to speak with the dead" lies precisely in its imprecision.[7] Certainly, the conviction that history (and therefore literary history) *matters* must now have become rather shaky. So that we are left somewhat insecure in our legitimation procedures. It is perhaps in its entanglement with the history of everything that literary history finds its best justification.

26. Pedagogically speaking, the pursuit of a careful literary history offers not a confident narrative (others will do that) but an experience of limited satisfaction and frequent arrestation in saying things about the past and, now more than ever, a continual and always (by definition) unsatisfactory speculation about the origins and implications of acts of mind in the present. The perceived gap between past and present is greater than it used to be thought in the days when we could, with good ethical and epistemological conscience, chronicle either the emergence of a national culture or its obverse in class struggle and roads not taken. We can no longer claim, as Husserl still could in the crisis of the 1930s, that the perception of a "unitary meaning" to history would be consonant with the posture of "radical self-understanding," each following from the other (14, 17). Unitary meaning and radical self-understanding have both been exposed as myths. Understanding, then, is going to be defined in terms of possible or multiple meanings and radical self-doubt.

27. We cannot fetishize "antiquarian" history as a solution to our problems, but it is a restraint upon despair or chaos. It is the more intellectually fertile the more resistant it remains to appropriation within monumental or critical histories. At a time when history in general is increasingly deemed irrelevant, the explicitly conservationist mission of antiquarian history may be our best hope for having something to work with should history ever again become a matter of urgent concern. Against the explicitly but restrictively political mandates of critical and monumental histories, antiquarian history holds out the ideal of disinterest, even as disinterest is deemed no longer possible. As such, it is minimally political and therefore available for alternative and unpredictable politics in an imagined future.

28. Faced with a generation inclined to believe in an end to history, the task of historians of all kinds is first of all one of preservation. Literary historians are especially pressured because of the subsistence of "literature" within an ethos of presence and presentism whose effect is always to dissolve the historical into the immediate. Given the general disposition of literary criticism toward advocacy, prophecy and testimony, even of chaos itself, literary history enacted under the banner of antiquarianism, skepticism and hesitation may not win many converts. Never mind. If we can hang on to its practice in this age of accountability, we may have the satisfaction of holding out an option for an intellectual activity not generally available in the education sector.

29. Moreover, if we are indeed about to return, in our weariness at the pursuit of microscopic localisms in approved postmodern style, to a new kind of grand narrative—that typified, for example, by a faith in something called global culture (a faith that was perhaps never completely abandoned) and in an end to history,[8] then there might be a useful polemical function to our inconclusive literary histories. I, at least, cannot quite think the thing farewell. I am not betting on futures, but there is nowhere I'd rather be for now.

Works Cited

Barthes, Roland. *On Racine*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983.

Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Trans. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

James, William. "*Pragmatism*"; *and Four Essays from* "*The Meaning of Truth*." Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1970.

Lanson, Gustave. "Literary History and Sociology." Trans. Nicholas T. Rand and Roberta Hatcher. *PMLA* 110, no. 2 (March 1995).

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Notes

[*] Reprinted by kind permission of *SubStance* (#88, 1999, pp. 5-16).

[1] On this topic, see my *The Academic Postmodern and the Rule of Literature: A Report on Half Knowledge* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[2] See, for instance, Thomas James Wise's forgeries of nineteenth-century editions as reported in Richard D. Altick, *The Scholar Adventurers* (New York and London: The Free Press and Collier-Macmillan, 1966) 37-64.

[3] I have explored this syndrome in *Subject to History: Ideology, Class, Gender*, ed. David Simpson (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991) 1-33, 163-90.

[4] See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1899) 363-400.

[5] See Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3.

[6] I have written at length on the anecdote in *The Academic Postmodern*, 41-71.

[7] See Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988). Greenblatt's chapter "Invisible Bullets" (21-65) is well known as a *tour de force* of new historical criticism. It moves deftly between the texts of high and low cultures and between different genres as it comments on the plays of Shakespeare; and it implies (without developing) a relation between its historical material and the critics's present in its thesis about the contained or licensed subversiveness of colonialist ideology (35, 37, etc.) which, whether or not it describes the sixteenth and seventeenth century, certainly rings true as a perspective on the condition of the late-twentieth-century literature professor in America. This conjunction cannot be pushed to the point of theorization without, of course, destroying the elegance of the essay and the credibility of its history; but neither can it be ignored by a critic sensitive to the preoccupations of presentist consciousness. So it is registered as a persisting hint, and small chink in the facsimile of "history."

[8] This is the argument of Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Modern, Anti, Post, and Neo," in *New Left Review*, 210 (1995), 63-101.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Preface to *Radiant Textuality: Literary Studies After the World Wide Web*

Jerome McGann, University of Virginia

"Knowledge of the world means dissolving the solidity of the world."

—Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*

1. In one sense the story running through this book is a very old story. We sometimes see it as the story of Faust and Margaret, and it comes again as Beauty and the Beast or as any of that wondrous fairy tale's mutations. A hundred years ago Henry Adams recognized its emergence in a historical tension he named the Dynamo and the Virgin.

2. The Computer and the Book—their relation has much in common with those three legends. For the book was once upon a time the very emblem of Faustian power. As late as 1870 Emily Dickinson could think that "There is no Frigate like a book." The thought charms us now precisely in its quaintness, since current imaginative voyagings are everywhere traversing digital space. And so bibliographical lamentations begin to arise, "Ou sont les livres d'antan?"

3. This book is a commentary on that question, and the commentary is organized around two ideas about humanities-based digital instruments. The first is that understanding the structure of digital space requires a disciplined aesthetic intelligence. Because our most developed models for that kind of intelligence are textual models, we would be foolish indeed not to study those models in the closest possible ways. Our minds think in textual codes. Because the most advanced forms of textual codings are what we call "poetical," the study and application of digital codings summons us to new investigations into our textual inheritance.

4. To date that summons has been slow to develop, which brings me to the second idea that organizes this book. Digital technology used by humanities scholars has focused almost exclusively on methods of sorting, accessing, and disseminating large bodies of materials, and on a certain specialized problems in computational stylistics and linguistics. In this respect the work rarely engages those questions about interpretation and self-aware reflection that are the central concerns for most humanities scholars and educators. Digital technology has remained instrumental in serving the technical and pre-critical occupations of librarians and archivists and editors. *But the general field of humanities education and scholarship will not take the use of digital technology seriously until one demonstrates how its tools improve the ways we explore and explain aesthetic works—until, that is, they expand our interpretational procedures*.

5. A close genetic relation holds between the book and computer. For textual and digital forms alike, however, this historical continuity has brought questions and problems that have not been studied at all well precisely because the genetic relation between the two media has been too much taken for granted, as if it were simple to see and understand. The situation is emblemized in the dichotomy of enthusiasm and skepticism that marks so much of the current discussion—indeed, that organizes the discussion along two sides.

6. We have to break away from questions like "Will the computer replace the book?" So much more interesting are the intellectual opportunities that open at a revelatory historical moment such as we are passing through. These opportunities come with special privileges for certain key disciplines—now, for

engineering, for the sciences, for certain areas of philosophy (studies in logic), and the social sciences (cognitive modeling). But unapparent as it may at first seem, scholarship devoted to aesthetic materials has never been more needed than at this historical moment.

7. That necessity leaped to one's attention in 1993 with the coming of the World Wide Web (W3). Until that epochal moment, digital technology had moved at the margins of literary and humanistic studies. The tools were taken up largely by some linguists and form-critical scholars, and by specialists interested in problems of storing and archiving scholarly (textual) materials. Even word-processing tools came slowly into the hands of humanities scholars. We forget that ten years ago—I am writing this sentence in late February 2000—the number of humanities scholars who used any computerized tools at all was relatively small.

8. A discontinuous historical event occurred during those ten years, and in the course of its unfolding emerged W3, the digital environment that organizes and commands the subjects of this book. To the speed and ubiquity of digital intercourse and transaction have been added interface and multi-media, and that, as the poet said, "has made all the difference." Our sense of language will never be the same.

9. Or rather, perhaps, our sense of it—in every sense—has been renewed, restored to something like the richness that it possessed in the Middle Ages, and that is still available in the works descending to us from that remarkable period—pre-eminently in its greatest invention, the medieval church and cathedral. From Santa Sophia to St. Mark's to Monreale, and across all of Europe and England, the doors of human perception were flung open in those amazing multimedia environments. And not only in Europe. Scattered across the globe from China to New Guinea to Egypt to the Nazca desert in Peru are the remains of human inventions of similar and even more amazing complexity. Next to them, even our most recent and advanced virtual reality tools and constructions seem primitive indeed.

10. However toddling they appear, contemporary instruments of hyper and multimedia constitute a profane resurrection of those once-sacred models of communication. To get a clear grasp of their historical emergence one would have to return to the middle and late nineteenth century, when so much of what is apparent today was being forecast: in mathematics and physics, in logic, in the emergence of photography. My own special field of interest, textuality, underwent a great renewal at the same moment. In England, the work of John Ruskin, D. G. Rossetti, and William Morris catalyzed a complex set of historical forces into the Arts and Crafts movement and, more particularly, into the Renaissance of the Book. In the rediscovered "Grotesque" art of the Middle Ages was heard—the metaphor is deliberately mixed—the first premonition of the famous proverb that would define the coming of the digital age a century later: the medium is the message.

11. This book is a report on some early attempts to understand how that proverb might be read by people interested in humanities education. It is based in certain ideas about language and semiotic systems that recur throughout history—ideas that may seem not to match with many common formulations. In my view, however, the problem here lies in the formulations, not in the actual fact of the matter (so to speak).

12. Recall that even before we began creating formal systems of visual signs—systems that generate this very sentence-object you are now reading—the language we use is woven from audible and visible elements. And as the syntax of that last sentence is designed to suggest, this textual condition of ours is constructed as a play of incommensurable elements, of which temporality is one. Linguistic units are not self-identical, as even the briefest reflective glance at a dictionary will show. Indeed, they don't even occupy fixed positions within a given textual space—the specialized space of this reading-text, for example—since a variety of overlapping and incommensurable planes transact all textual spaces. Textual space and textual time are n-dimensional simply because they locate embodied actions and

events.

13. Computational systems are not designed like the first sentence of the previous paragraph. They are designed to negotiate disambiguated, fully commensurable signifying structures.

14. "Indeed! And so why should machines of that kind hold any positive interest for humanities scholars, whose attention is always focused on human ambiguities and incommensurables?"

15. "Indeed! But why not *also* ask: How shall these machines be made to operate in a world that functions through such ambiguities and incommensurables?"

16. Both of those questions have set the terms for the work of this book.

17. Anyone who works with texts in disciplined ways, and especially those interested in their rhetorical and aesthetic properties, understands very well the incommensurability of textual forms. How to gain some clarity and control over our textual condition has been a perpetual human concern, and is a central concern of this book as well. It is organized to show how the work at University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) from 1993-2000 led to the practical implementation of catastrophe and quantum models for the critical investigation of aesthetic forms. Suggestive as the ideas of quantum mechanics have been for many humanities scholars, the scale of quantum effects has seemed far removed from the apparent scale of textual and semiotic phenomena. The latter involve macroscopic events, the former submicroscopic—indeed, quantum effects are, in the view of many, not objective events at all but simply types of measurements and calculations executed for certain practical ends. It was Roger Penrose, I think, who first argued most effectively against this view. He proposes that "the phenomenon of consciousness is something that cannot be understood in entirely classical terms" and that "a quantum world [might] be *required* so that thinking, perceiving creatures, such as ourselves, can be constructed from its substance" (Penrose 226).

18. The empirical data of consciousness are texts and semiotic phenomena of all types—"autopoetic" phenomena, in the terms of Humberto Maturana and Francesco Varela. This book will argue that our "classical" models for investigating such data are less precise than they might be and that quantum dynamical models should be imagined and can be built. The book focuses on the historical circumstances that forced this argument into being. It traces the development of certain experiments with textual materials to their unforeseen but, I would now say, necessary consequences: most importantly, the practical illustrations and proposals for new models of critical and interpretational study.

19. One final comment may be helpful. This book's commitment to a "quantum poetics" may call to mind, for Modernist scholars at any rate, Daniel Albright's stimulating and elegant study of certain strains of twentieth-century writing, *Quantum Poetics*. Albright's book investigates "the appropriation of scientific metaphors by poets" (1) whose work emerged at the same time as the great figures of early twentieth-century science. Albright argues that these writers exploited certain scientific figures in their imaginative work. My argument is quite different: that quantum and topological models of analysis are applicable to imaginative writing *tout court*, that these models are more adequate, more comprehensive, and more enlightening than the traditional models we inherit from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and Marx. "Quantum poetics" in this study does not signify certain figures and tropes that stimulated the practices of a certain group of historically located writers. On the contrary, it comprises a set of critical methods and procedures that are meant to be pursued and then applied in a general way to the study of imaginative work.

20. The final discussion of "The Ivanhoe Game" illustrates the difference very clearly. "The Ivanhoe

Game" models a new form of critical method. Its applicability is of a general kind—as much for Yeats and Pound as for Keats and Byron, for Shakespeare or Dante, for Ovid, Lucretius, the Bible. It is a model that we propose to build in a new kind of textual environment—a digital one. Finally, it is only a model—*one* model. We propose to build it in the hope that it may stimulate others to develop and build more adequate critical tools.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Reading Queerly: A Presentist's Confession

Gregory Tomso, Ithaca College

1. There are probably any number of ways to honor presentist influences on literary criticism in general, and on literary history in particular, without necessarily contributing to an "end to history" or to "despair or chaos." David Simpson has recently associated both of these apocalyptic outcomes with presentist work in cultural studies, work that in his view "has no need for history" except in the "parodic or reductive" forms granted to it by recent inquiries into the operations of such "uncontested" hegemonies as orientalism, sexism, homophobia, and Eurocentrism. As someone who has always considered it both intellectually and politically vital to articulate the fundamental connections between my scholarly efforts and my own sense of ethics and social values as an out, gay man, I confess that my own work strikes me as precisely the kind of presentist scholarship that Simpson sets out to critique. Assuming I understand and indeed practice presentism as Simpson defines it, I'd like to explain here at least a few of the assumptions about history and reading that motivate recent presentist work in literary criticism and history. In clarifying some of these some these basic beliefs, my aim is to articulate both the historical and the more personal or subjective value of presentist scholarship.

2. Since it is the status of history itself that most interests Simpson, allow me to begin with a specific, literary-historical concern that has been central to my own work: the complex relationship between discourses of illness and sexuality in late nineteenth-century American literature. I'm thinking here of writers such as Henry and Alice James, Mary Wilkins Freeman and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who used illness as an occasion to think critically about the body and about the relationships between physical sensation and self-knowledge. Seeking to understand the full range of corporeal and mental experience, writers of nineteenth-century illness narratives often combined, in ways that seem foreign to us today, depictions of pain and suffering with depictions of real or imagined episodes of self-fulfillment, many of which included experiences of sensual and even sexual pleasures. These narratives of illness have much to teach us about nineteenth-century intellectual history and about the shared discursive or narrative contexts in which thinking about illness and pleasure intriguingly coexist.

3. From a presentist point of view, I'm interested in the history of illness precisely because I'm a real person living in a real world that still seems to be inordinately confused about its relationships to illness and to sexual pleasure, both separately and together. Many Americans, for example, have trouble thinking about sexuality in general, and non-procreative sexuality in particular, outside of epistemologies of pathology. Moreover, many of us still go about our lives drawing from a deeply impoverished repertoire of cultural and social responses to life-threatening and chronic illness. Consider, in this regard, President Bush's liberal politics of "compassion." In contemporary American culture, compassion now functions as the single most appropriate response to anything and anyone that is not straight, white, male, middle-class, middle-aged, healthy and able. A politics of compassion challenges us not to think differently about ourselves or anybody else, but encourages us to think exactly the same as we always have—that is, not to think at all about the vast demographic and social changes currently underway in this country, or about the dramatic rise of chronic and potentially deadly illness, such as cancer, AIDS, and tuberculosis, but to shore up "our" ontological, national, and hygienic distinction from *all those other people out there* who desperately need and deserve "our" compassion because of "their" national, sexual, racial, or physical difference.

4. As it turns out, then, reading illness narratives from the nineteenth century has quite a lot to do with the

politics of "compassionate conservatism," among other presentist concerns. In the current political climate it seems like the very act of reading may actually be one of the most profoundly political acts we have left as individual citizens. Maybe reading nineteenth-century literature isn't political in the most immediate sense of the term—I hardly expect Mary Wilkins Freeman to become a major counter-culture icon, although it's fun to imagine exactly what that would be like—but I do think that literary study provides one way to grasp the complex and contradictory currents of American social and intellectual thought that are increasingly lost to us in the ongoing homogenization of our politics and public discourse. In this light, reading in response to any particular presentist concern—such as the experience of discrimination or violence—seems less indicative of a desire for the end of history than it does precisely for the opposite: a desire to know history as such, and to experience whatever pleasures and disappointments such familiarity with history might bring. If anything, it is the present moment itself that feels like an end to history, a white-washing of America that threatens us with its own illusion of atemporality, of being frozen in place despite a desire by many Americans to move ahead. It is this feeling, and fear, that renews my sense of reading as a political act and that makes history so vital to my own work.

5. Having grown into adulthood in the 1980s, a time when many popular and scientific understandings of queer sexualities were violently yoked to theories of contagion and to fears of bodily corruption and death, I'm more than a little sensitive to how ideas about sexuality and illness have very real impacts on people's lives. We still live, for example, in a society where roughly twenty percent of the population believes that people with AIDS have "gotten what they deserve."[1]

6. Literary history provides one important access point for exploring the history of ideas, and for learning how it this that we have come to know the "things" we call sexuality and illness in the first place. The value of this intellectual history lies in the possibilities it offers for thinking differently about things, like illness and sexuality, that we often take to be stable, natural aspects of our "being." Knowing that our ideas and that our ways of understanding our bodies and our identities have very dynamic histories can help us, at certain times, to call into question some of the most violent and deadening ways of thinking about sexuality and illness, and I don't just mean our thinking about homosexuality as a disease. I also think that our contemporary cultural responses to the rise of chronic illnesses such cancer, AIDS, and tuberculosis are too limited by fear and by paranoia. Writers from the late nineteenth century seem far more able and willing to write engagingly and productively about illness and death than most writers in recent decades have been, though that seems to be changing somewhat today. In any case, we have a lot to learn from nineteenth-century writers' more familiar, less constipated and less metaphorically sterile relationship to chronic ill-health. Acknowledging this fact hardly seems a threat to history itself; if anything, any threat contained here is directed toward the present, since in reading tales from the past, we might learn to read our present experiences differently.

7. Reading the present differently is, I confess, a reward I value highly in critical work, and I suspect that it is precisely this subjective, presentist relation to literary scholarship that has Simpson worried. I wonder, though, if what Simpson wants from reading and from literary history is really all that different, in the end, from what I want. "We want a history," he writes, "we—some of us—desire one." In literary history, he adds, we find "a space for infinite composition and endless mediation and meditation." If Simpson is suggesting here that reading literature and doing the work of literary history are first and foremost manifestations of desire, desires to compose, to meditate, and to do the much more difficult work of crafting and sustaining the self, then I certainly agree with him; and if he *is* suggesting this much, then what is really at stake in his critique of presentism may not be "history" itself, but how it is that we, as literary scholars, understand our collective and individual relationships to reading. How is reading an exercise of our subjectivity? To what extent is it an expression of our selves? And what, after all, is literary criticism, or literary history, if not the manifestation of a desire to tell compelling stories about our own past, our present, and our future?

8. Asking these questions of Simpson's critique leads me to the conclusion that his antiquarianism may not really be so different from the presentist-inspired historical projects he critiques. The former is less explicit about its dependence on narrative than the latter, yet both are equally motivated, and indeed excited by, the promise of present or future meaning. This similarity may not be an obvious one, since Simpson's antiquarianism advocates a kind of history that might almost be thought of as decadent—that is, as history for its own sake, history that tries not to care about or perhaps tries to disavow its ideological, political or identificatory significance in favor of an ostensibly less subjective and more intellectually altruistic agenda that paradoxically values both randomness and thoroughness. The curious thing about this history, however, is that it values seemingly insignificant details for a very particular reason: namely, that someday those details might become important by being incorporated into a narrative of the past that is actually useful to someone—that is, to a particular subject. Thus Boswell, Simpson writes, included even the most trivial bits of information in his account of the life of Samuel Johnson, "knowing that what seemed trivial to him might seem important to someone else." It seems, then, that we can only speak of knowledge as being "nonapplied" or "unassimilated"—that is, as being the kind of "minimally political" knowledge that Simpson's antiquarianism purports to offer—when we use those terms in relation to the interests of particular subjects.

9. Given this fact, it strikes me as a little ironic that it is the scholarly interests of few particular subjects from our own time that troubles Simpson the most. He seems to be expressing his unhappiness not only with the monolithic and anti-historical nature of presentist reading practices, but with the equally objectionable worldviews of presentist readers themselves. He imagines a whole generation of scholars "generally hostile to history itself" and, as mentioned before, takes an especially critical view of writers who, in his view, vainly attempt to expunge various "isms" from the present "by the fierce light of radical intelligence." Yet if it's fair to say that the critical menace posed by presentism and its practitioners is, for Simpson, the threat posed to history by a kind of all-assimilating critical subjectivity, then that threat seems far less real if subjectivity isn't always the imposing and monolithic force that Simpson sometimes makes it out to be. While the "antiquarian" methods that Simpson urges us to adopt invite us to experience reading as a "meditative" act in which our epistemological and ultimately our ontological relations to historical material are both tentative and multi-directional, he doesn't afford this kind of flexibility to presentist readers. It is precisely this flexibility, however—this possibility for exploring new forms of subjectivity—that makes presentist work so compelling. We might think here of Eve Sedgwick's recent description of queer subjectivity as "stretched" and "ragged," and of her description of queer reading as a rather unstable cluster of desires, interests and "competences."[2] In this view, queer reading—like presentist reading more generally—is not nearly as "monumental" or as "monolithic" as Simpson would have it. With Sedgwick's understanding of subjectivity in mind, perhaps the most important question Simpson raises is ultimately one about how we might address, and come to respect, different understandings of the relationships among reading, knowing, and being. The "end to history" Simpson fears might only be a shift in how we, as literary critics, understand knowledge, and a corresponding change in the kinds of historical information we deem relevant, interesting, or serviceable. For the time being, at least, Simpson has little cause for worry. As readers we are not monumental, but historical, and queer.

Works Cited

"Americans Still Confused by AIDS." *The Advocate* 830 (January 30, 2001): 18.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Introduction is About You." *Novel Gazing*. Ed. Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997. 1-37.

Notes

[1] According to a 2000 Centers for Disease Control survey, as reported in *The Advocate*, issue 830 (January 30, 2001), 18.

[2] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Introduction is About You."

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Critical Presentism

Phillip Barrish, University of Texas at Austin

Excerpts from Liberal Identity, Literary Pedagogy, and Classic American Realism *(forthcoming from Rutgers University Press)*

> "If there is a politics of literary culture, or a sense of public stakes in literary representation, then what political consequences follow, if any do, from various ways of taking a work's specific time and place into account when we read it?"
> —James Chandler

1. Developing an iconoclastic methodology that I call "critical presentism," this book uses close analysis of works by such classic American realists as Wharton, Twain, James, and Chopin to "read" contemporary liberal identity in contexts that range from an affirmative action court case to the liberal arts classroom. The book's aims are two-fold: to provide new critical insights and pedagogical approaches to specific realist works, but also to develop fresh interpretative and political leverage over present-day liberalism. I seek to investigate liberal identity primarily as it overlaps with currently-lived modes of American exceptionalism and whiteness.

2. American exceptionalism refers most broadly to the belief that American culture, politics, and selves have always been qualitatively different from those of European countries, and as such exceptionalism has been a central theme for analysts of America at least since Toqueville.[1] The phrase American exceptionalism can also refer more narrowly, however, to a characteristic national sense of "specialness," a specialness taken to imply both unique privileges and unique responsibilities. The faith in and desire for American specialness goes back to the Puritans' vision of founding "a city upon a hill," a community elevated by God with the mission of modeling Christian charity and virtue to the rest of the world. As many observers have noted, national assumptions about America's and Americans' exceptional qualities and status have proven remarkably adaptive over the centuries, appearing in multiple contexts and in various incarnations.[2]

3. I am especially interested in how American exceptionalism intersects with a defining facet of white liberal identity today: the desire to believe that, although there may still be room for significant improvement, American race relations have made immeasurable progress over the last fifty years. But why turn, with this sort of contemporary question, to literature of a hundred years ago? After all, the canonical era of American literary realism, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was an historical period widely characterized by the open and violent assertion of white supremacy and of Jim Crow segregation. Today, in contrast, not only has legal segregation been ended for almost fifty years, but for almost twenty years we have been living in what Robert Charles Smith has dubbed the "post-Civil Rights era," in which racial issues and questions seem both more multi-dimensional and more subtle than those posed by segregation's stark binaries. Race-related conflicts of today, moreover, tend to be fought on different terrains than those of a century ago, and they draw on legal, cultural, and intellectual tools that were then unavailable (including, for instance, science's undercutting of "race" itself). How, then, might works from the period of classic American realism nonetheless give us a better grasp on specific psychological, socio-institutional, and representational dynamics informing contemporary white liberalism? Why bring such anachronistic matters to the literature of Wharton, Twain, James and Chopin?

4. One obvious and powerful answer is that of the cultural historian. No matter the changes involved, America's cultural past has helped to create America's present. Demonstrating that whiteness even *has* a history, for example, works to undo its unceasing efforts to attain the status of timeless norm. Historicist scholars working in literary studies and other disciplines (especially in history itself) have begun to render visible American whiteness's often hidden past. They have uncovered, for instance, the mechanisms by which various immigrant groups initially counting as non-white (such as the Irish and Eastern-European Jews) have achieved white identities and the economic, social, and political benefits that whiteness brings with it (Ignatiev; Jacobson; Brodkin). Providing this sort of genealogy for American whiteness crucially resituates our understanding of and possible approaches to it in the present.

5. But when historicist literary study does contribute to our understanding of present-day versions of American whiteness or American exceptionalism, it does so through the mediation of an historical argument. Even when purposefully intending to shift how we see some aspect of today's cultural or political scene, historicist literary scholarship proceeds, first and foremost, by locating a work or body of literature in its "own" cultural moment (the moment of its production and primary reception) (Chandler). In contrast, I intend in this book to juxtapose "present" concerns and "past" literature without paying much attention to the historical specificity of the past literature.

6. Within literary studies, the term "presentism" or "presentist" is widely used to attack scholarship or criticism that appears not to respect what T.S. Eliot called the "pastness of the past." Employed as a term of opprobrium, "presentist" refers to criticism perceived as blithely and un-selfconsciously projecting a critic's own political or social concerns onto literature of another era. The impulse towards "critical presentism" that motivates my study, however, seeks new ways of reading literature of the past not only *in* but *with* the social present—and of doing so self-consciously and also (as I hope to demonstrate) productively.[3]

7. Intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra defines what he calls presentism—but what I would call blithe or *uncritical* presentism—as "the dream of total liberation from the 'burden' of history" (Lacapra 39). Although LaCapra is not speaking here either of America or of whiteness, his definition of (uncritical) presentism identifies what may be the most central, indeed "exceptional," ideological trait that whiteness and America share. America was imagined from the start of British colonization as a "new world," where one might escape the crushing, confining weight both of Europe's and of one's own personal history. As for whiteness, it can be called an *anti-historical* mode of identity, insofar as it strives always to forget its own status as anchored in society and history—its status as historically and socially constructed, marked, bounded.

8. It is in part because, historically, white American identity has been so resolutely anti-historical that I believe *critical* presentism can make an important contribution. If, as Philip Fisher has recently argued, what makes the United States most distinctive is its "culture of creative destruction," in which "the only constant is change" and the past is continually "discarded" to clear space for the "next-on," then, I would maintain, it can only be salutary to find new angles of vision on how the past can and does unpredictably, even uncannily, stay present. Each of the literary texts focused on in the following chapters is classically American in thematizing the desire for a "new world," one which will leave the past unambiguously behind. For example, Edith Wharton's 1911 short story "Autre Temps. . ." tells of the divorcée Mrs. Lidcote's wish to find a "new dispensation" in a "new" New York, one whose elite society has jettisoned its former horror of divorced women. Twain's *Huck Finn* is driven by the desire to escape the entrapment of a pre-determined status and identity—as a minor child subject to adults' manipulative designs, as a slave—and it ends with a fantasy of "the territory," a place apart from the constraints and hypocrisies of fixed "sivilization." Yet, in these and the other texts my book discusses, the past recalcitrantly persists, and it persists in potent, wrenching, surprising, and sometimes deadly

ways. In none of these works, despite an overwhelming desire that it be otherwise, is the past ever smoothly assimilated into, let alone erased by, the present or the "new." Indeed, in each text the willful imagination that the past be past renders it more difficult to recognize how and where it remains undigested and unchanged.

9. Drawn from the heyday of America's literature of manners, the canonical realist works on which I focus are densely complex. Yet they are also handily compressed, compressed enough to fit into our very hands. Henry James has commented that "really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so" (James, *Roderick Hudson* xli). Literary works by such artists as James and Wharton are famous for how they artistically encircle, circumscribe, the densely overcrossing lines and cracks of multi-dimensional social and emotional "relations," while still preserving those relations' ramifying complexity.

10. By practicing a species of what Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner have called "wrenching . . . recontextualization," we can heuristically use the complicated "geometry" of the circles drawn by such literary artists as James and Wharton to help us reframe and thus re-read aspects of our own social present that are otherwise hard to bring into focus (including the often counter-intuitive "geometry" of our social present's relationship with the past). Indeed we might think of the dense textual circles that this classic realist literature provides not merely as frames but as *refractive lenses*—lenses bulging (like those of the classic bookworm's glasses) with the thickness both of what James called "the art of fiction" and "the air of reality." These literarily "thick" lenses can, as it were, break up the light differently, revealing different angles, surfaces, and contiguities of our social present than are usually apparent.

11. Henry James's 1877 novel *The American*, for example, portrays its allegorically named New World protagonist, Christopher *Newman*, as "a good fellow wronged"—wronged by ethnic and national others' humiliating refusal to appreciate his fine qualities and intentions. James's complex elaboration and critical investigation of Newman's inner feelings and public posture as "after all and above all . . . a good fellow wronged" helps to shed light on contemporary white American exceptionalism, and the "good fellow wronged" is a figure to which several of my chapters return (303).

12. It is not merely coincidental that the thick literary lenses which I select to help us re-see, and thereby re-articulate, present-day dynamics of white liberal exceptionalism all derive from the turn of the twentieth century. For one thing, in addition to the compact yet especially rich field of social relations and emotions portrayed by authors such as Wharton and James, certain rough but striking socio-historical parallels between their time and our own add extra resonance and suggestiveness to juxtapositions of materials from the two periods. Despite the obvious differences between the two periods, their rough parallels include, for example, the end of Reconstruction with its great strides and even greater promises and, almost exactly a hundred years later, the effective end of the Civil Rights era, with its great strides and even greater promises. So too, at the turn of the twentieth century the mass immigration of what were regarded as racial and ethnic "others" from eastern and southern Europe challenged and complicated the overlapping identity categories of "white" and of "American," as is also happening today in America with its unprecedentedly high levels of Latin American and Asian immigration.

13. Even more than for any suggestive historical parallels between "their" moment and ours, however, I have selected the particular literary works focused on in this study because they are among the works that I have found myself most drawn to reading, re-reading, and teaching over the last ten years. As will become clearer in individual chapters, questions of pedagogy provide an important motive and background for "critical presentism" as an approach and for its use in the current project. A critically

presentist approach can, I believe, help empower students and teachers to view the hard and intricate work of analyzing literature as offering, among its other rewards, the possibility of a surprisingly proximate social and political payoff. The same attentive, complex, and creative readings of literary texts that we develop in our classrooms may, at least in some cases, be self-consciously turned or "troped" to help shed new light on even the most resistantly complicated facets of the world surrounding (and permeating) our classrooms.

14. One of the more radical implications of New Critical pedagogy, especially as such pedagogy evolved during the period of the G.I. Bill, was to democratize the study of literary aesthetics. New Critical formalism implied that one could perform valid aesthetic analysis by focusing ever more closely on a literary work in itself, whether sitting in a classroom with other students or at the kitchen table. As I conceive it, "critical presentism" aspires to the same democratizing impulse, although directed not toward aesthetic evaluation but toward what has become the defining problematic of literary studies since the 1970s—that is, the relationship between literature and power. In this book, I wish through demonstration to remind students and teachers that reading literature closely, even literature from a different time period, can sometimes refine our understanding of how representational, socio-institutional, and psychological modalities of power operate today *without* our first needing to elaborate historical genealogies.

From Chapter One: What Edith Wharton Teaches about Higher Education and the Defense of Affirmative Action

15. In what follows, I will be juxtaposing Edith Wharton's 1911 short story "Autre Temps. . ." with key documents from *Hopwood v. Texas*, a Fifth Circuit case which in 1996 rendered illegal all state-sponsored affirmative action programs in Texas higher education.[4] The Hopwood case constituted the first successful attack on a university's practice of affirmative action sponsored by the Center for Individual Rights in Washington, D.C., and it has set many patterns later followed by similar such cases in Michigan, Georgia, Oregon, and elsewhere. I will argue here that, despite glaring disjunctions, Wharton's "Autre Temps. . ." can serve as a penetrating examination, albeit *avant le mot*, of some of the Hopwood trial's most central and difficult aspects. Above all, "Autre Temps. . ." helps us better understand The University of Texas's failure to mount a sufficiently strong legal argument in favor of continuing its own affirmative action programs, despite the largely sincere efforts that The University and its attorneys did indeed make.

16. David Simpson has recently complained that "an ethos of presence and presentism" robs our students of "a sense of the past *as* past," and that it thus can "rob them of the experience of challenge and difference that the university ought . . . to provide" (14, 7). My contention throughout will be that, when performed with critical awareness, presentist reading and teaching of literature can indeed provoke challenging encounters with difference, both external and internal.

Political Metaphor

17. . . . I would appeal further to the distinguished, if still sometimes controversial, theatrical tradition in which directors devise purposefully anachronistic stagings of plays to comment politically on the directors' own times and places. Defending this presentist practice, Jonathan Miller (himself responsible for several such productions in theater and opera) asserts that every dramatic work "must necessarily undergo change with the passage of time, and that this change is best inflicted upon the work deliberately rather than, as it were, by default" (27). The plays of Shakespeare, in particular, have been staged so as to produce what John Elsom calls "political metaphor." For instance, "at a time when the rigours of Stalinist censorship could be felt through Eastern Europe, Shakespearean productions

became a way of commenting on political events without running the risk of banning or imprisonment" (Elsom 2).[5] The possibility for political metaphor has motivated directors even in contexts not heavily burdened by state censorship. Discussing his staging of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* in 1988, British director Michael Bogdanov observed, "When Prince John of Lancaster meets the Archbishop on neutral ground, and tricks the rebels into laying down their arms, I think of Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik" (Elsom 17).

18. "Political metaphor" is what I wish to undertake as well, although not in Bogdanov's sense of locating one-to-one correspondences between given actors or events. Bogdanov conceives the political metaphors that directing Shakespeare makes available to him as based on parallels or analogies:

> I look for the ways in which the political circumstances were handled then, and find inspirational parallels in what is happening now. We governed disgustingly in the fourteenth century, and we are still governing disgustingly today. (17)

When "political metaphor" is understood as Bogdanov seems to have done, that is as a way to underline parallels between two sets of "political circumstances," the metaphor presumes a certain transparency, an easy readability, for both sets of circumstances. Even before juxtaposing them, the director can already see—he already *knows*—the underlying essence of each political moment. This prior grasp of each political moment's central truth "inspir[es]" the parallels or analogies that the director's staging will subsequently work to emphasize.

19. Presuming that we already grasp in full each side of the comparison, metaphor as analogy can obscure crucial differences. Moreover, finding analogies between instances of racial and gender discrimination can be particularly hazardous. In order for them to be rendered parallel, each side of the race/gender analogy tends to be reductively simplified.[6] Wharton's "Autre Temps. . ." explores the effects of discrimination based on gender, marital status, and sexual behavior, all within an elite upper-class context, while, by contrast, *Hopwood v. Texas*'s central focus is racial discrimination at a large state university. Despite the hazards of reductiveness and oversimplification, my juxtaposition of "Autre Temps. . ." and *Hopwood* does rely to some extent on teasing out parallels between the 1911 short story and the 1996 court case. The possibilities of metaphor as analogy are not what I primarily seek to emphasize, however. My overriding aim is to develop a model of political metaphor as *catachresis*.

20. A species of metaphor, catachresis is a "strained," "abused," or "perverted" use of language that names what otherwise has no name (a table *leg*, a *head* of cabbage, the *teeth* of a comb) (Murfin 41). I hope to show that "Autre Temps. . ." and *Hopwood v. Texas* each help to give visible figuration to a core of meaning internal to the other one—or, rather, to a core of non-meaning—that might not be recognizable without the presentist juxtaposition. For both "Autre Temps. . ." and *Hopwood v. Texas*, this core of non-meaning, moreover, turns out to be what allows for an unspeakable experience of enjoyment—of *jouissance*—that each text adumbrates. In both cases, this secret *jouissance* shadows socially liberal practices: respectively, "changes and . . . readjustments" in social attitudes towards divorce in the early twentieth century and official antiracism at The University of Texas during the 1990s (Wharton 252).

Works Cited

Adams, David Keith, and Cornelis A. van Minnen. *Reflections on American Exceptionalism*. Staffordshire, England: Ryburn Pub. Keele University Press, 1994.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

---. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner. "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X." *PMLA* 110.3 (1995): 343-49.

Brodkin, Karen. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998.

Chandler, James K. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*. Series Q. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

Elsom, John. *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?* London and New York: Routledge in association with the International Association of Theatre Critics, 1989.

Fisher, Philip. *Still the New World: American Literature in a Culture of Creative Destruction*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Grillo, Trina and Stephanie Wildman. "Obscuring the Importance of Race: The Implications of Making Comparisons between Racism and Sexism (or Other Isms)." *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader*. Ed. Adrienne Katherine Wing. New York: New York University Press, 1997. 44-50.

Ignatiev, Noel. *How the Irish Became White*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

James, Henry. *The American: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, and Sources, Criticism*. 1877. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978.

---. *Roderick Hudson*. 1908. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Kott, Jan. *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1964.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Soundings in Critical Theory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

Loehlin, James. "'Top of the World, Ma': Richard III and Cinematic Convention." *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and Video*. Ed. Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Miller, Jonathan. *The Afterlife of Plays*. Distinguished Graduate Research Lecture. San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1992.

Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

---. *Nature's Nation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Murfin, Ross and Supriyia M. Ray. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.

Schafer, Byron E., ed. *Is America Different: A New Look at American Exceptionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Simpson, Michael. "The Case for `Antiquarian History'." *SubStance* 28.1 (1999): 5-15.

Smith, Robert Charles. *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Now You See It, Now You Don't*. Suny Series in Afro-American Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Wharton, Edith. *Roman Fever and Other Stories*. Ed. Cynthia Griffin Wolff. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993.

Notes

[1] For recent treatments see Schafer, Adams and van Minnen, and Lipset.

[2] Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*; Miller, *Nature's Nation*; Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins of the American Self*; Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*.

[3] See Dinshaw, especially Introduction, and Chapters One and Two.

[4] The key decision in the Hopwood case was actually issued by a panel of three judges assigned to consider the Hopwood plaintiffs' appeal of an earlier District Court ruling in the case. The judge in the District Court case, Sam Sparks, had found unconstitutional the specific affirmative action mechanisms in place when Karen Hopwood *et al* had applied to UT's Law School, but he had awarded no damages to the plaintiffs. Moreover, following the Supreme Court's 1978 opinion in *Bakke vs. University of California*, Judge Sparks's ruling would still have allowed for a system that treated race as one (but never the sole deciding) factor in admissions. The Fifth Circuit's three-judge panel went much further, declaring that race could not play any sort of role in admissions decisions by the Law School. (In doing so, the panel controversially--and some argued illegally—set *Bakke* aside.) Although there was room for ambiguity about whether the panel's decree against giving race any consideration whatsoever applied to anything besides UT Law School admissions, Texas's attorney general at the time, Dan Morales, issued a binding interpretation that read the ruling as broadly as possible. All of Texas's public universities, Morales said, would have to cease any consideration of race not only in admissions but in financial aid and hiring. Four months after the three-judge panel's decision, the Supreme Court declined to become involved in the case. As of this writing (February 2001), The University's most recent appeal, partly concerning the damages and costs awarded to the Hopwood plaintiffs but also asking for an *en banc* hearing on the case's constitutional issues by the Fifth Circuit's full panel of 15 judges, has been denied.

[5] In addition to the symposia of theater people transcribed in Elsom's text, see the influential work by Kott to which they were responding. A prominent recent example of pointed anachronism in the staging of Shakespeare is Richard Loncraine's 1995 film of *Richard III*, which resets the play into a fascist-dominated England of the 1930s and also resonates with the Thatcher era. For an illuminatingly close analysis of this movie, see Loehlin.

[6] See Grillo and Wildman. For a critique of how nineteenth- and early-twentieth century white women used race-based slavery as, in effect, a political metaphor for their own oppression, see Sánchez-Eppler.

Romanticism & Contemporary Culture

Presentism and the Archives

Jon Klancher, Carnegie Mellon University

1. In the fall of 1999 I assigned David Simpson's essay "Is Literary History the History of Everything?" to students in my seminar on Romantic and present-day versions of historicism at Carnegie Mellon University. I hoped they might be intrigued, as I was, by Simpson's unusually spacious sense that literary history has effectively become the "history of everything"—even at the considerable risk of being the history of "nothing"—and that in this openness to "everything" lies its great, though precarious and paradoxical claim. By being open to everything, literary history appears capable of resisting disciplinary closure of the kind we associate with the scientific, the social-scientific, and even the historiographic disciplines. Unlike its more disciplined historical counterpart, literary history also collects or absorbs information that may not really explain anything, and for which there may be only a potential use in some as yet unforeseen situation in time to come (thereby such data may appear "non-contingent" now). Collecting and preserving such information can mean not merely that literary history can entertain the possible or "what-if" histories that might have already happened (but didn't). It also means, by extension and far more consequentially, that literary history could conceivably write the history of the future by registering data that as yet have no definitive shape or sense: "just in case."

2. Simpson is also generous to the long-maligned figure of the antiquarian, who furnishes an unexpected model for literary historians by offering a "disinterested" curiosity and a receptiveness that takes time to produce and to satisfy, and that (post)modernity has had very little time for—the economic downsizing of the humanities having inexorably produced the speed-up of its procedures of knowledge and transmission. Read alongside other recent rethinkings of historicist method such as James Chandler's *England in 1819* and Paul Hamilton's *Historicism*, Simpson's essay could widen the discussion further (I imagined), partly by challenging younger cultural critics to reconsider their automatic assent to such articles of poststructuralist faith as Foucault's and Nietzsche's opposing of "critical history" to "antiquarianism," a position that has encouraged far more talk about archives than patient and knowledgeable familiarity with the detailed research methods and habits they demand.

3. As it turned out, I was mistaken, and my students reacted instead—in retrospect I can very well see why—to the considerable aggression Simpson's essay also shows toward a "postmodern cultural studies," and to the essay's unfortunate way of conflating a frivolous and generally reactionary position (*posthistoire*) with a serious position—one which Simpson himself rather reductively describes as the "history of some uncontested hegemony (orientalism, sexism, homophobia, Eurocentrism, and so on) which it is the critic's task to expunge from the present by the fierce light of radical intelligence." Some of my students working outside Romantic studies, unaware of Simpson's own earlier theoretical and culture-historical scholarship, took this broadside argument to be yet another old-humanist attack on the young. It's not exactly that. Instead, I began to think, it's another sign of something that my own seminar was also, in a very different way, trying to address—a sign that the cultural studies "project" itself has stalled, and that what Foucault famously phrased as "the history of the present" has become well-nigh indistinguishable from the less self-conscious forms of "presentism" that one now sees widely noted and usually excoriated in print and on the Web. The current, increasing skepticism about cultural studies is no doubt related dialectically to its breathless propulsion only a few years back, when it was not only the newest-best thing in the humanities, but even the apparent solution to broad, deep contradictions of both intellectual and institutional kinds. In view of this, my own seminar was partly designed to confront the current problems of practicing cultural studies by locating the meaning

and the necessity of the word *and* in the phrase "literary and cultural studies," an expression tellingly absent, it happens, from Simpson's own essay. And since my students were already predisposed to think cultural studies has little to learn from those still speaking receptively of "the literary," Simpson's rhetoric effectively drove the "cultural" and "literary" even further apart in ways these students were only too ready, for opposing reasons, to accept.

4. Most definitions of "presentism" I know have associated it with a lack of regard for context, for the meanings or senses that a given practice or text had for its historical contemporaries as opposed to how it may now read to us. But to judge by what has been recently posted on the Web, voices in American classrooms, from textbook watchdog groups to history-department syllabi, are increasingly strident as they warn against committing the presentist sin:

> Presentism [argues the president of the Textbook League] is the practice of viewing the past, and judging the people of the past, in terms of today's standards and orthodoxies. Serious historians reject and denounce this practice. Political ideologues and schoolbook-writers use it regularly, to bamboozle and deceive their audiences. (Bennetta)

> Early in any semester [says the syllabus for a course in American history], student analyses of the past almost always commit the historical fallacy of "presentism"—judging the past by the standards and understanding of the present, and leaving matters at that. But you must try to overcome your impulse to presentism (which professional historians also feel). . . . (Chase)

In his customary take-no-prisoners style, William J. Bennetta thinks it sufficient to write off presentists as deceivers or bamboozlers and let it go at that. But on the American history syllabus, Professor Chase seems a bit more uneasy about censoring presentism, especially given his or her sense that it's an "impulse" that wells up in the professional historian too. This curious note of sympathy with the more youthful presentists in his audience puts Chase in enough of a bind about the matter that he has to finish his paragraph with an emphatic final reason why you *must* overcome your impulse to presentism: "I can't give passing grades to *presentists*!" (Emphasis in original.) That does settle it. Yet the compulsion, confession and gradebook terrorizing may be some indication that the matter of presentism and professionalism is not be as cut, dried, or easily laid to rest as many in this discussion would like to think.

5. In the recent history of literary study, "presentism" has been a more complex and moving target. The new literary historicisms emerging in the 1980s objected in one way or another to the effectively presentist disregard for historicity characteristic of a still high-riding literary theory, poststructuralist or deconstructive, a kind of textualist obliviousness to history carried over from structuralism and other formalisms. But the sort of presentism tackled by Simpson in "Is Literary History. . .?" has been of a different and more aggressive kind, mobilized precisely against the more self-consciously elegant varieties of historicism as a demand to answer the "pressures of the present" by way of a hybrid theoretical-historical discourse that often conceives its historical work as less an organized campaign than a guerilla raid. These opportune raids on history for information (and history *as* information) to support a discourse on the "politics of the present" often amount, however, more to a stripped-down or instrumentalist version of historicism, than to the sort of anti-historical stance or *posthistoire* Simpson here associates them with.

6. Nonetheless, by lumping disparate tendencies together under the rubric of "presentism," Simpson's polemic can usefully encourage further thinking about why all too many cultural-studies appeals to history can *feel* so thin, underdeveloped, uncomplex. Is it because cultural studies has "no need of history" that its historical claims can frequently seem so attenuated or badly posed? Do most

practitioners of cultural studies, as Simpson supposes, actually embrace postmodernism's "end-of-history" eschatology? It seems to me much more likely that it is because cultural-studies arguments almost always *require* a history that their makers can too often assume there always *is* a history, ready-made, to appeal to. Such appeals may very well become "reductive or parodic" when they ransack cultural history in the search of historical narratives that will supplement this or that argument about power. If undergraduates can be too willing to punch in demands to the search-engines of contemporary information flow as if they were warp-speed hotlines to historical knowledge, graduate students are not doing qualitatively more than this when they pick up the latest and most provocative social histories (I mean books written by the protocols of that professional discipline, like Linda Colley's authoritative *Britons* or similar works) and deploy them as substitutes for their own culture-historical inquiry—or, equally likely, for their own historicist *reading* that would answer to a disciplinary base in literary-and-cultural studies. This second-hand or transcribed social history isn't "parodic," just misconceived, and testimony (if any is needed) to the increasing inability to discern what our disciplinary base actually is in "literary-and-cultural studies," and why it matters that we cannot and should not be simply pale echoes of better-equipped social historians like Colley herself.

7. In such cases, if I may put it this way, there is a will only to *use* history and not to *hear* it. What this instrumental historicism too often lacks, and the more fiction-conscious or hermeneutic kinds of historicism better display, is the moment of self-inspection, the skeptical or even self-critical feedback loop which may say in effect, "Here is the price of your historical 'knowledge,'" or even something like, "Here is what another world has to reveal about your own faltering attempts to construe this past." Whether in the late eighteenth century or the late twentieth, the best historicisms have been those that in one sense or another attempted to grasp this sense of fragility or provisionality of their own instruments, to hear a message from the past they didn't anticipate or wish to hear, and often to make that hearing a reflexive part of the critical knowledge they seek to forge.

8. If Simpson is objecting to anything broad and substantial in cultural studies' uses of history, then, I think it must be this: not "presentism" as such—without which in *some* measure no historicism of any kind could sow doubts about received or unjustifiably authorized historical accounts—but rather a determination to keep history enlisted in one's own campaign as if it never could offer anything with which to instruct the campaign itself. Putting it this way, it seems to me, might forestall invidious appeals to sheer archivalism, or to a relevance-averse kind of antiquarianism that, in my experience, very few students of considerable ambition and intelligent conviction will now be likely to take up.

9. As for "antiquarianism" itself—a term that I would agree has to be revalued from Nietzsche's contempt—Simpson's defense of that posture doesn't register the mounting evidence that "disinterested" historical information was only sometimes the aim of antiquarian scholarship in the past, and perhaps more rarely than we used to think. As the recent work of Jon Mee, Katie Trumpener, and Marilyn Butler have been demonstrating in some depth, eighteenth-century British antiquarians like Joseph Ritson or Francis Douce amassed volumes of popular as well as obscure pieces of text, custom, numbers, and even stray facts in what proved to be a keenly "interested" project of criticizing the early-modern authority of precedent and theology. "In their reconstruction of indigenous cultural forms and institutions suppressed after the English conquest," writes Trumpener in the early pages of *Bardic Nationalism*, "the antiquaries demonstrated both the enormous cultural damage wrought by imperial occupation and the continuing strength of culture to oppose its homogenizing force" (14). Meanwhile, Trumpener's own work will serve as quite superb evidence of the historicist vitality that can animate the best work in recent cultural-and-literary studies.

10. I want to conclude by posing a question to my fellow respondents in this forum as well. Despite disagreeing with his view of the matter, they, like Simpson, offer to treat "presentism" as a party to be joined or to be shunned. I think this offer should be declined (in either direction). First, because any

genuine form of historicism is already presentist in its very challenge to an unentailed, objectivist historiography. Second, because any mode of presentism worth defending is already caught up in a potentially intricate, reflexive comparison of "then" and "now." Third, because today's public appetite for histories of all kinds—from the chain bookstores and the History Channel to academic conferences and journals—may well be unmatched in any previous time, except possibly for the extraordinary popular vogue of "universal history" in the 1760s, 70s, 80s, and early 90s. Yet today, unlike then, the plurality and marketability of such histories does not at all suggest a confidence *in* history as such, and by the older historical-materialist landmarks that continue to inform both the imagination of cultural studies and Simpson's own unease, it's debatable how much of this current history-shopping helps us achieve any greater or more authentic feeling for historical movement or prospect for historical agency. I suspect this lack is what he and my students feel in common, although Simpson's rhetoric in "Is Literary History the History of Everything?" sets them entirely at odds instead. Rejecting the choice offered by history *or* presentism might help us stop internalizing the bad legacies of the Culture Wars and get on with thinking through the complexities of producing "literary and cultural studies" as *knowledge*.

Works Cited

Bennetta, William J. "More Fake 'History' from Glencoe." *The Textbook Letter January-February 1999*. 9 June 2001.
www.textbookleague.org/96freen.html

Chandler, James. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998.

Chase, William. "The Development of Modern America," Syllabus for *History 2227*. Western Maryland College. 10 June 2001. http://wwwfac.wmdc.edu/HTMLpages/Academics/History/2227info.htm

Hamilton, Paul. *Historicism*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Klancher, Jon. "1800/2000: Romantic and Postmodern Historicisms," Syllabus for *English 76-834*, Carnegie Mellon University, Fall 1999. http://www.rc.umd.edu/features/pedagogies/syllabi/klancher1800.html

Simpson, David. "Is Literary History the History of Everything? The Case for 'Antiquarian' History." *SubStance* 88 (1999): 5-16.

Trumpener, Katie. *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997.

Fictional Representations of Romantics and Romanticism

A (Partially Annotated) Bibliography Generated by the NASSR Discussion List

February 1997
Latest Updates: August 2002
Compiled by Melissa J. Sites and Neil Fraistat

This bibliography lists items (books, plays, films, etc.) that represent historical Romantic figures in fictional contexts, and takes as its starting point a thread which began as a query about current (twentieth-century) works of science fiction that feature Romantic figures. The thread soon spread to include the representation of Romantic figures in non-SF works from the twentieth century and earlier.

Annotations appear on the page; links lead to related comments or sites. Thanks to contributors Rick Albright, Bryan N. Alexander, Robert Frost Anderson, Amanda Berry, Jay Clayton, Tom Dillingham, Bruce Graver, Ann Hawkins, Mary Lynn Johnson, Ken Johnston, Steve Jones, Jack Kolb, Beth Lau, John W. Leys, Alan Liu, Jack Lynch, Anne Mellor, Carole F. Meyers, Richard A. Nanian, Rebecca Nesvet, Megan O'Neill, Morton Paley, Alan Richardson, Daniel M. Riess, Michele Sharp, Atara Stein (who started the thread), Nan Sweet, and Julia Wright. Special thanks to all those who sent in annotations and to William Jewett for his especially long list of related works.

See also our bibliography on *Frankenstein*: an annotated chronological selection of works adapted from or responding to Mary Shelley's novel. Along the same lines, see our bibliography of Pop Culture Interpretations of Romantic Literature, mostly pop song renditions of Romantic period poems.

[Novels and Short Fiction](#) + [Novels Pre-1960](#) + [Romans-a-clef](#) + [Plays](#) + [Films](#) + [Misc.](#)

CONTEMPORARY NOVELS AND SHORT FICTION

Adams, Douglas. *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (1987). "The Coleridge incident appears in chapters 6 and 35, although Dirk Gently disturbs STC intentionally, not by accident." --J. Lynch. Lynch suggests that this might be the story described by N. Fraistat "in which a contemporary (to us) lover of 'Kubla Khan' goes back in time and stands guard at STC's door while he sleeps, determined to stop the man from Porlock. Well, he waits and waits and no man from Porlock appears. Finally, worried, he knocks at the door to find out if the man from P has somehow got round him only to discover that, dum de dum dum dum, HE is the man from Porlock."

Ackroyd, Peter. *Chatterton* (1986)

Anderson, Poul. "The Person From Porlock." "The theme is that there are alien beings watching us, and every time a human being is about to make a significant breakthrough they send a Person from Porlock as a distraction."--M. Paley.

Bear, Greg. *The Infinity Concerto* (1984) and *The Serpent Mage* (1986). "[in which] Coleridge's interruption during his composition of 'Kubla Khan' was orchestrated by the Sidhe, who were afraid that the Song of Power embodied in the poem would result in a cleansing of our world's evils, which are themselves

orchestrations of the Sidhe to keep humans in chains."--M. O'Neill.

Bishop, Michael. *Brittle Innings* (1994). "a wonderful book by a Nebula award-winning author. The basic premise is that Frankenstein's creature never died and is alive and playing baseball for a minor league team in the South during WWII. The story is told through the eyes of a young man recently drafted to the team who ends up sharing a room with 'Jumbo.' Said young man was deserted by his father early in life and his efforts to handle his anger and betrayal are mirrored by Jumbo's feelings toward his creator. Adding complexity is Jumbo's increasingly parental role. Not really SF in the 'classic' sense of the word -- Jumbo's appearance is the only SFish element but a great book nonetheless."--C. Meyers.

Burgess, Anthony. *Abba Abba* (1977). re Keats

Burgess, Anthony. *Byrne* (1995) "as I understand, is in part a take on *Don Juan* (it adopts the *Juan's* verse form)."--R. Anderson.

Byatt, A.S. *Possession* (1990). "for the later end of the matter"--T. Dillingham.

Card, Orson Scott. *Seventh Son* (1987). "The first book in an alternate history of early nineteenth-century North America; portrays William Blake as an itinerate prophet."--M. Sites.

Chernaik, Judith. *Love's Children* (1992)

Combuchen, Sigrid. *Byron* (1993)

Edwards, Anne. *Haunted Summer* (1972). See below for a discussion of the film based on Edwards's book.

Farmer, Philip Jose. *Tarzan Alive* (Playboy, 1981 - ISBN0-872-16876-X) "Farmer's biography of John Clayton, Lord Greystoke. Byron is mentioned briefly several times. Most notable is Farmer's assertion that Lord John Roxton (from Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World) and several pulp heroes, The Shadow, The Spider, and G-8, are all descended from Byron's daughter, Augusta Ada Byron. See also Farmer's *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life* (Bantam, 1973)."--J. Leys.

Fleming, Ann. *Death and Deconstruction* (1995). "detective novel set among the Byron Society at Newstead Abbey"--N. Sweet.

Gibson, William, and Bruce Sterling. *The Difference Engine* (1990). "An alternate history which recognizes Ada, Countess of Lovelace (Byron's daughter) as the world's first computer programmer. Alternate lives are imagined for other Romantics, like Keats, and Byron, who leads the Rad Lords in Parliament."--M. Sites.

Holland, Tom. *Lord of the Dead: The Secret History of Byron* (PocketBooks, 1995 - ISBN 0-671-53425-4). "In this book, Byron is really a vampire. Holland ingeniously incorporates elements of Byron's life and themes in his poetry to vampirism, but it seems an awful lot like other vampire novels in terms of structure and plot (sort of like *Interview with the Vampire* but about Byron)."--A. Stein. "Published in Great Britain as *The Vampyre*."--J. Leys.

Iremonger, Lucille. *My Sister, My Love* (1981)

Kenyon, F W. *The Absorbing Fire* (1966). re Byron

Marlowe, Derek. *A Single Summer with Lord B.* (1970)

McKenna, John. *Clare* (1993)

Nelson, Ray Faraday. *Time Quest*. ". . . long out-of-print, follows Kate and William Blake's 'mad' marriage and immersion in 'The Learning.' Portrays meetings among W. Blake, Paine, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft at Joseph Johnson's. Recasts Blake's allegories as time-travel, simplifying some, of course. . . . But my students and I enjoy my xeroxed copy--it speaks to feminists, historicists, and allegorians (?) alike."--N. Sweet.

Nicole, Christopher. *The Secret Memoirs of Lord Byron*. (Lippincott, 1978 - ISBN 0-397-01290-X)

Norfolk, Lawrence. *Lempriere's Dictionary*. (1991, "Winner of the 1992 Somerset Maugham Award") "deals at length with the 1780s and 1790s. Besides the obvious reference to the mythological dictionary of John Lempriere, there are also a variety of allusions to historical and literary figures of the period, from direct references to Warren Hastings, to a conspiracy-theory re-imagining of the French Revolution, to (my favourite) the 'Pantisocratic Pirates'--founded upon radical principles, and led by Wilberforce van Clam."--J. Wright.

Nye, Robert. *The Memoirs of Lord Byron* (1989)

Powers, Tim. *The Anubis Gates* (1983) and *The Stress of her Regard* (1989). "The former deals with a professor travelling back in time and meeting Byron, while the latter very ingeniously attributes a type of vampire possession to Byron, Shelley, and Keats, cleverly incorporating incidents in their lives and quotations from their poems into a very coherent system." --A. Stein.

Prantera, Amanda. *Conversations with Lord Byron on perversion, 163 years after His Lordship's death* (New York : Atheneum, 1987). "Delightfully odd. The premise is that some computer types download Byron's biography and (thus, they hope) personality to see if they can get the computer to produce more *authentic* Byron poetry. Great spring-break reading."--A. Hawkins.

Prokosch, Frederic. *The Missolonghi Manuscript* (1968; FSG, 1984). "essential . . . A book worth stealing and xeroxing. Or maybe you could get reprint permissions."--J. Kolb. "A novel written in the form of Byron's Journal. Takes place, as the title suggests, during his stay in Missolonghi."--J. Leys.

Roszak, Theodore. *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein* (1995)

Sherwood, Frances. *Vindication* (1993). "dreadful"--T. Dillingham.

Simmons, Dan. *Hyperion* (1989), *Fall of Hyperion* (1990), *Endymion* (1995), *The Rise of Endymion* (1997). "A far-future science fiction tetralogy in which an Articial Intelligence reconstruction of John Keats plays a major role. They're long books and quite a commitment of time, but they're excellent, and the treatment of Keats's life (and death) is very movingly integrated into the story. . . . Aside from the fact that the words "I was an English major" seem to scream from every page (the first novel is a version of Canterbury Tales, among other things), [the novels] are very engrossing and explore Keats's life and poetry in a fascinating way. Essentially, [the Keats AI] becomes involved in (what else?) the entire fate of the galaxy." --A. Stein. "I skimmed [*Endymion*], whose Romantic allusions were Keatsian but nicely oblique in ways. Its symposium section reminds me, as Romantic dialogues do, of Wordsworth's *Excursion* times *Julian and Maddalo*."--N. Sweet.

Sontag, Susan. *Volcano Lover* (1992).

Stephenson, Neal. *The Diamond Age*. ". . . another beautifully rendered and detailed imagination of [a cyberpunk] world, though ... more gentle and erudite in tone than picaresque. The use of the Romantics, including Wordsworth and Coleridge, is clear. But the real heart of the book is the 'clave' or "phyle" (corporate clan) of the Vickys, who style their life and ideology after the Victorian age. The plot of the novel places the world view of the Vickys into play against the world of a powerful post-colonial China in ways

that make for delicious ironies in the history and meaning of imperialism (including a neo- or retro-Boxer Rebellion). In general, the whole notion of setting Victorian culture in play against the grain of postindustrial and global culture is a delicious one."--A. Liu (excerpted from a short essay/post on **cyperpunk**; here's the whole thing).

West, Paul. *Lord Byron's Doctor* (1989). "great to teach. An excerpt: 'Had I known, in later years, I would be called a plagiarist, I would have taken careful notes of the whole creative onset and have Mary and Shelley sign them as witnesses, for at least the squelching of rumour.' Polidori-as-contemporary-subject makes good reading."--A. Berry.

Williams, Walter Jon. "Wall, Stone, Craft." *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (Oct/Nov 1993, pp. 161-239) "An alternate reality story set in a universe where Byron didn't have a club foot. The story is told from Mary Shelley's point of view, shows Byron as a war hero (he helped defeat Napoleon!) who's just been created The Marquess of Newstead, and gives a different inspiration for *Frankenstein*."--J. Leys.

Wilson, Colin. *The Glass Cage* (1966)

MORE NOVELS PRE-1960

Ashton, Helen. *William and Dorothy* (1938)

Beck, Lily Adams. *Glorious Apollo* (1925) re Byron

Cary, Joyce. *The Horse's Mouth* (1944)

Dodd, Catherine Isabel. *Eagle-feather* (1933) re Shelley

Edschmid, Kasimir. *The Passionate Rebel* (1930) re Byron

Harvey, Alexander. *Shelley's Elopement* (1918)

Kruger, Rayne. *Young Villain with Wings* (1953) re Chatterton

Landau, Mark A. *For Thee the Best* (1945) re Byron

Moore, Doris Langley. *My Caravaggio Style* (1959) re Byron

O'Neil, George. *Special Hunger* (1931) re Keats

Pollock, John Hackett. *The Moth and the Star* (1937) re Shelley

Wylie, Elinor Hoyt. *The Orphan Angel* (1926) re Shelley

PURPORTED ROMANS-A-CLEF IN WHOLE OR IN PART

Disraeli, Benjamin. *Venetia* (1837)

James, Henry. *The Aspern Papers* (1888)

Lamb, Lady Caroline. *Glenarvon* (1816)

Lloyd, Charles. *Edmund Oliver* (1798)

Peacock, Thomas Love. *Nightmare Abbey* (1818)

Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Visionary"

Shelley, Mary. *The Last Man* (1826)

PLAYS

Ashton, Winifred. *Come of Age* (1953) re Chatterton

Bond, Edward. *The Fool* (1978). About John Clare: "brilliant, sad and grittily true to the spirit if not the letter of his legend. Bond is somewhat critical of Clare, but also sees him fighting vainly with his circumstances, the class system, reality. Bond absolutely refuses to turn the play into a hagiography or a distant period piece" --R. Nesvet.

Brenton, Howard. *Bloody Poetry* (1985). "Byron, the Shelleys, and Claire Clairmont league in incest and irritate one another, to the amusement of Harriet Shelley's ghost" --A. Richardson.

Brown, Alice. *Charles Lamb* (1924)

Dangerfield, Elma. "*Mad Shelley*" *: a dramatic life in five acts* (1936).

Drinkwater, John. *Robert Burns* (1925)

Ferber, Maurice. *Lord Byron* (1924)

Flexner, Anne Crawford. *Aged 26* (1936) re Keats

Goodchild, William. *Shelley* (1934)

Hardinge, George. *Rowley and Chatterton in the Shades* (1782)

Jellicoe, Ann. *Shelley; or, The Idealist* (1966)

Lacy, Ernest. *The Bard of Mary Redcliffe* (1916)

Lavery, Emmet. *Second Spring* (1938) re Wordsworth

Lea, Fanny Heaslip. *Crede Byron* (1936)

Linney, Romulus. *Childe Byron : a play in two acts* (1981) re Byron

Mitchell, Adrian. *Tyger* (1971)

Parker, Dorothy and Ross Evans. *The Coast of Illyria* (1949) re the Lambs

Peabody, Josephine. *Portrait of Mrs. W.* (1922) re Wollstonecraft

Read, Sir Herbert Edward. *Lord Byron at the Opera* (1963 radio play)

Rice, Cale Young. *Love and Lord Byron* (1936)

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia* (1993). ". . . wonderful play about Byron which alternates between the misguided present-day attempts by a group of dogmatic literary critics to interpret and reconstruct key events in the Byron circle, and the actual events. Hilarious."--D. Riess. "Yes, hilarious and heart-stopping. Went to a recent performance of it in Los Angeles, and was transfixed for three hours. Worth any amount of effort to see."--A. Stein. " . . . wonderful intellectual theater. . . . its mathematical and scientific dimensions are . . . better accessed through that other Byron, Ada, Countess of Lovelace, whose prophetic notes on computer programing undergird the character Stoppard names Tomasina. ...St. Louis Repertory Theatre [gave a] fine production through March 7, 1997."--N. Sweet.

Toller, Ernest. *The Machine-Wreckers* (1923 Luddite play with Byron)

Vigny, Alfred de. *Chatterton* (1835)

Williams, Tennessee. *Camino Real* (1953 play with Byron cameo)

FILMS

Clouds of Glory: William and Dorothy and *The Ancient Mariner* dir. Ken Russell (1978 TV documentaries). "David Warner as WW, David Hemmings as STC"--A. Richardson.

Dead Man dir. Jim Jarmusch (1996). "Johnny Depp plays an accountant from Cleveland named William Blake. He travels into a surreal western landscape where he meets a Crow Indian named 'Nobody' (an equivalent of the Crow name with which he had been branded, meaning something like 'he who talks loudly, but says nothing'). Nobody takes him for a reincarnation of the great English poet whose 'words of power' he had read in London as a boy where he had been taken as a captive. Oddly enough, William Blake doesn't remember his poetry or his supposed past, but acquires a power to 'speak' with violence--he shoots a number of men, and is finally shot himself--never seeming quite to understand what he's doing or why."--M. Sharp.

Don Juan de Marco dir. Jeremy Leven (1995). "Starring Johnny Depp; with allusions to Byron's *Don Juan*."--N. Sweet.

Gothic dir. Ken Russell (1986). "Gabriel Byrne as Byron, Julian Sands as PBS, Natasha Richardson [no relation] as MWGS"--A. Richardson. ". . . filmed in the Lake District"--W. Jewett. "I've occasionally used a very small clip from this film (about 5 minutes or so) to introduce the topic of the ghost-writing contest. . . . In Russell's hands, the events become a nightmare of drugs, sex, horror . . . . It is probably the note of excessiveness to which I most object . . . . The dramatization of Mary's waking dream--and her vision of Fuseli's 1781 painting "The Nightmare" lit by flashes of lightning, (I don't know if the painting was there or not, but it's a nice touch) do provide an interesting atmosphere, and this is the portion of the film I've used a few times in my classes."--R. Albright [excerpt; here's all of Rick Albright's review]. "Rick Albright's discussion of *Gothic* shows how, in the hands of skilled critic-teacher, even a godawful film like this one can be used to open up important points. I remember getting the video when it first came out, to show to a party

of friends, and shutting it off in embarrassment after 5-10 minutes. On the other hand, in a class, its very excessiveness opens up issues about *Frankenstein* and romanticism and the Gothic that more "faithful" adaptations of the novel may not."--K. Johnston.

Haunted Summer dir. Ivan Passer (1988). "Laura Dern as Claire Clairmont (which would you least want to be pursued by, Byron and PBS or a clutch of velociraptors?), Eric Stoltz as PBS, Alice Krige as MWGS"--A. Richardson. "Alex Winter (Bill of Bill & Ted fame) as Byron's excellent doctor"--W. Jewett. "Alice Krige as MWS!!! I get a distinct sense of satisfaction from the idea that the woman who played the Borg Queen also played the woman who gave us *Frankenstein*."--M. Sites. "...the best aspect of this film for me ... is how appropriately young the actors look. I have shown *Haunted Summer* to my classes, and always the students are shocked to see that these long-canonical figures were barely older than themselves. They may know it from their assignments, but to see it is a different matter. It casts their experimentation, sexual and chemical ... in a very different light from *Gothic*, which makes them out to be decadent and haggard. ..."--R. Nanian [excerpt; here's all of Richard Nanian's review].

Impromptu dir. James Lapine (1991). (Judy Davis as George Sand, Hugh Grant as Chopin, Julian Sands as Lizst, Mandy Patinkin as Alfred De Musset, Bernadette Peters as Marie D'Agoult, and Ralph Brown as Eugene Delacroix.)

Lady Caroline Lamb dir. Robert Bolt (1972). Richard Chamberlain as Byron.

Remando al viento dir. Gonzalo Suárez (1987) (re-released as *Rowing with the Wind* Miramax video, 1999) . "Hugh Grant as Byron and Elizabeth Hurley as Claire Clairmont--this really seems too good to be true, but that's what the Internet Movie Database claims"--A. Richardson. "Also features Lizzy McInnerny as Mary Shelley, Valentine Pelka as Percy Bysshe Shelley, José Luis Gómez as Polidori. The premise is that Mary Shelley somehow brings her Creature to life, and that it is then responsible for the series of deaths in her life. The biggest flaw of the film is in the skewed timeframe and inaccurate manner of these deaths--especially the death of baby William, who is far too old when he drowns (!) in the movie. The biggest strength of the film is characterization: Lizzy McInnerny plays a serious and vividly intelligent Mary, while Valentine Pelka hits the perfect balance of restrained mania in Shelley's more stressful moments. Plus, the actors bear striking resemblances to the Shelleys. Hugh Grant, despite his lack of any kind of Scottish accent, plays a suitably world-weary Byron, while Elizabeth Hurley's Claire has just the right degree of desparation. Unfortunately, Teresa Guiccioli and Jane and Edward Williams are less well fleshed out. My favorite moment is the confrontation between Godwin and Shelley: Shelley holds a pistol to his head and Godwin quotes *Queen Mab* at him!"--M. Sites.

MISCELLANEOUS

Benet, Laura. *The Boy Shelley* (1937 bio for adolescents)

Bogan, James and Fred Goss. *Sparks of Fire* (1982 Blake omnibus)

Crawford, Walter and Ann. "The new Coleridge bibliography [which] includes references to Coleridge in fiction, rock lyrics, films, advertisements--wherever they occur. ... a good place to start for Coleridge material, if one wanted to compile a list of allusions to Romantic-era writers."--B. Lau.

Graham, Jorie. *Erosion* (Princeton UP, 1983). This volume includes two poems about Keats: "Scirocco" (p. 8), which begins "In Rome, at 26 / Piazza di Spagna, / at the foot of a long / flight of / stairs, are rooms / let to

Keats" and "For John Keats" (p. 50), which begins "Today, with a friend, in an archaic yellow light, I visited the graveyard / here, an easy lawn behind the school. . . ."--M. Johnson.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "P.'s Correspondence" (1845 story)

Holmes, Richard. *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (1985)

Jackson, Shelley. *Patchwork Girl*. " . . . hypertext with the premise that the female creature was in fact created (although by Mary Shelley, it seems, whose alter ego she seems to become). Jackson gives each of creature's body parts an individual biography, literalizing the "body as text" metaphor in a very funny way. Towards the end (if these things have endings), the creature's seams start to fall apart and she has to hold herself together with (here I may be mis-remembering) duct tape, except that when she bathes she has to remove the tape, and then her parts float around separately in the soapy water. *Patchwork Girl* is a Storyspace hypertext, available from Eastgate Systems. I highly recommend it."--B. Graver. "This ambitious hypertext, one of the most successful efforts in the medium, . . . has no proper beginning or end, but it does have numerous narrative characteristics, including characters, settings, flashbacks, and shifting points of view, as well as temporally consecutive sequences, which arouse various kinds of affective response in the reader, such as curiosity, suspense, amusement, erotic tension, and surprise."--J. Clayton (more).

Lindsley, Mar Flora. *Marvelous Boy (Education of a Poet in Age of Reason* (1979 sonnet sequence on Chatterton)

McPherson, Sandra, ed. *Journey from Essex: Poems for John Clare*

Moore, Julia A. "A Sketch of Lord Byron's Life." A poem originally published in 1878. See Tom Dillingham's Transcription and Notes.

Morrison, Grant. *The Invisibles* " . . . [comic book/utopian fantasy which] featured a storyline involving Byron and both Shelleys discussing the nature of mind and utopia, with excellent use of *Julian and Maddalo* and *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*." --B. Alexander. "Mary Shelley and friends appear in issues 5-8, which have been collected in "trade paperback" format entitled *The Invisibles: Say You Want a Revolution* (ISBN 1-56389-267-7) --more durable and easier to acquire for the non-comics reader. This book is intended for mature readers and features graphic disturbing imagery--though less so in the sections that actually feature Byron and the Shelleys."--M. Sites.

Nicolson, Harold. "The Gamba Papers: Being a Review of the Memoirs of Pietro Gamba, Duke of Negroponte (If Byron Had Become King of Greece)" in Guedalla, et al., *If, or, History Rewritten* (1931 counterfactual history)