

## **Introduction – Michael Bradshaw, Andrew McInnes, and Steve Van-Hagen**

The traditional boundaries of Romanticism -- six male poets; the definite articles of Romantic image, imagination and ideology; an implicit focus on Englishness -- have been comprehensively contested to transform the discipline into the study of Romanticisms, broadening its generic reach to include novels, plays, polemic, periodicals, and print culture, alongside a widening canon of poetry. This multiple Romanticism questions the ideology of the Romantic Ideology, expanding its borders spatially, to include Four Nations, archipelagic, Europe-wide, transatlantic and postcolonial approaches, and temporally, beyond the 1790s and early nineteenth century to imagine a Romantic century running from around 1750 to 1850. As Nick Groom argues in the opening article of this special edition of *Romanticism*, history itself was being reconceptualised in the Romantic period, providing us with an historical sense as de-centred and democratic as archipelagic approaches to space have been: a layered and labyrinthine conception of temporality Groom characterises as catachthonic, enabling an alternative Romanticism to be traced.

The articles in this volume emerged from a conference called 'Edgy Romanticism / Romanticism on Edge' held at Edge Hill University, UK, in 2016, which sought to address the following questions: Where are the edges of Romanticism now? How do we define the boundaries of the discipline today? What is happening at the edges and borders of Romanticism, whether that be in the margins of the page; inscribed on the body, at nervous, physical or psychological limits; regionally -- broadly defined -- away from the metropolitan centre; or aesthetically, at the avant garde? Our contributors approach these questions from various viewpoints and methodologies, offering a kaleidoscopic perspective on the edges, borders, and boundaries of Romanticism. This resulting special issue of

*Romanticism* offers both a glimpse of the state of the discipline today, showcasing researchers at the cutting edge of their field, and a multimodal account of the period's fascination with edges and liminality. Our contributors consider various different aspects of the current expansion of Romantic studies, including geographical, historical, material, psychological, generic, and theoretical approaches, concluding with two essays which begin to explore Romanticism's rich afterlives from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. All the articles in this collection are interested in the new meanings which are generated at the edges and borders of existing knowledge. Rather than simply trying to 'push back boundaries' to incorporate the new within existing schemas, we attach value to the edge itself; we're not trying to expand the territory of Romanticism, so much as investigate what goes on at the contested and dynamic margins and borderlands of its edges.

Groom's leading essay, 'Catachtonic Romanticism: Buried History, Deep Ruins', excavates an alternative sense of history – sedimentary, fractious, and open to alternative interpretations – to complement new perspectives on space allowed by archipelagic methodologies which de-centre and democratize accounts of national identity. Groom uses Thomas Chatterton's poetry of historical English defeats, especially his several accounts of the Battle of Hastings, as a case study to explore eighteenth-century antiquarian accounts of national identity formation grounded in the political Gothic. Unlike the supernatural Gothic espoused by Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Chatterton draws on a conception of the Gothic based on racial theory, linking Britishness to the migration of ancient Gothic tribes, coupled with a Whiggish emphasis on constitutional liberty. Chatterton views history, predicated on defeats rather than victories, as reiterative and fragmentary: a warning to a present beset by crises of legitimacy. Coining the term 'catachtonic

Romanticism' to explicate this new vision of history, Groom argues that Chatterton's deliberately archaic language in his poetry is itself 'catachtonic', forcing his readers to interpret words which have been defamiliarized. Quoting generously from Chatterton's verse, Groom invites us to read Romantic poetry anew and newly made strange.

Liz Edwards' "'A Kind of Geological Novel": Wales and Travel Writing, 1783-1819' acts as an archipelagic companion piece to Groom's article on catachtonic Romanticism, expanding the historical focus of his essay to incorporate geography, geology, cartography as part of the polyvocal mode of travel writing. Arguing that Welsh travel writing is doubly distanced from the conventional centres of Romantic period thought because Wales as a geographical and national entity and travel writing as a genre are both neglected areas of research, Edwards conceptualizes scientific and literary accounts of Welsh travels as multi-layered, sedimentary even, leading to moments of 'stony sublime': extraordinary encounters with lithic landscapes. She borrows an apposite line from Christopher Meredith's 2013 poem 'Borderland' to argue that 'edges are where meanings happen'. Meredith's – and Edwards' – sense of meanings happening at edges serves as a leitmotif for this special issue of *Romanticism*.

Both Julia Coole and Merrilees Roberts make canonical Romantic poetry strange by focusing on the paratextual apparatuses of Byron's *Childe Harold* and Shelley's prefaces respectively, locating significant authorial concerns at the edges of their texts. Coole argues that Byron's footnotes to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Cantos I-II present the poet as an expert guide on an alternative Grand Tour of Europe, avoiding traditional tourist spots in France and Italy debarred by the Napoleonic Wars, and introducing an imagined audience of gentlemen to Albania

and Greece. Byron's claim to authority about foreign climes is translated, according to Coole, into a political call to the House of Lords, addressing the plight of the poor and disenfranchised in England. Byron's poetry, like Chatterton's in Groom's account, probes the crisis of legitimacy in British politics, this time caused by the widening gap between rich and poor. Roberts investigates a different chasm in Shelley's poetic personae, representing a traumatized subjectivity torn between sympathy and disinterestedness. Caught between Kantian aesthetics and the ethical demands of Adam Smith and David Hume's work on sympathy, the Shelleyan self emerges in his prefaces to *Alastor, Laon and Cynthna*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, as a soul in torment. In these moments of anguished self-construction, Shelley offers a critique of social and psychological demands on the poet and an argument for poetry as a means to alleviate this suffering. For both Coole and Roberts, paratexts offer their Romantic poets a space for experiment: Byron performs the roles of travel guide and politician in his footnotes; Shelley muses on the performativity of selfhood itself in his prefaces.

Emilee Morrall and Anna Fitzer shift the attention away from canonical poetry to the fiction of forgotten, or at least neglected, women writers. Morrall both laments and celebrates the continuing marginalization of Charlotte Smith in Romantic canon formation, arguing against Smith's erasure from canonicity but for her experimental creation of a vantage point for herself at the margins of culture. Mapping Jacqueline Labbe's insights into the significance of the edge and margin in Smith's poetry onto her still more neglected prose works, Morrall argues that Smith, like Shelley in Roberts's article, uses eighteenth-century aesthetics to think about the development of subjectivity in her novels. Drawing on the Burkean sublime, Smith places her heroines on the border of land and water in order to test their subjective responses

to terrifying experiences of spatial disorientation. Morrall argues that Smith's heroines long for bounded space, represented by domestic scenes near lakes or other inland bodies of water, but are repeatedly tested by sublime expanses of water which endanger them. Morrall suggests that the marginalization experienced by Smith's heroines functions as a meta-fictional comment on her own marginalization from literary canonicity. Fitzer is likewise interested in the use and critique of marginality in Alicia LeFanu's *Strathallan* (1816). She develops Coole and Roberts's interest in paratexts by focusing on epigraphs in *Strathallan*, arguing that LeFanu's wide-ranging and eclectic epigraphic quotations, located at the edge of her own fiction in turn locates her on the edges of mainstream Romantic culture: an edginess which affords LeFanu creative opportunities. Fitzer proposes LeFanu as a comic alternative to the solemnity of Hannah More and Anna Seward, two of the few women writers who are granted an epigraph in her novel, tracing the ways in which *Strathallan* critiques the didacticism of More and rebuts Seward's disdain for prose in its intertextual commentary on marginality, celebrity, and literary reputation.

Susan Civale and Alex Broadhead extend this discussion of reputation and legacy into the later nineteenth century and beyond. Civale begins by scrutinizing Mary Robinson's authorial strategies of sentimental disclosure and titillating concealment in her *Memoirs*, likening her tactical use of silence and erasure to burlesque. Robinson's scandalous reputation then becomes a case study in Civale's article for the ways in which Romantic-period women's writing is reformulated in later biography and fiction. Robinson's controversial gaps and lapses in the narration of her own life are reread by Civale as successful strategies to both entice and elicit sympathy in her readers, using the repetition of tropes from the *Memoirs* across a series of rewritings of Robinson's career throughout the nineteenth century and into

the early twentieth century. Civalé's essay shares concerns with Morrall's and Fitzer's, but argues that Robinson survives beyond her seeming neglect to live on in biographical and fictional accounts of her life inspired by her own carefully considered authorial strategies of disguise and revelation. Broadhead's concluding essay paradoxically returns us to some of the issues raised in Groom's introductory piece, not by looking at how the Romantics viewed the past but by thinking about the future of Romanticism in later counterfactual historiography and alternate histories. Broadhead begins by differentiating counterfactual historiography, as a 'what if?' scenario which depends upon the stability of existing personalities in imaginary scenarios, from alternate histories, a field of genre fiction more interested in a postmodern instability of identity. Broadhead connects counterfactual historiography to ideas of the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime and alternate histories to Shelley's interest in mutability and fragmentation, connecting his essay to Roberts' work on Shelley at his psychological limits. The process of generating multiple alternative possibilities from an original text or author is related to the distinctively Romantic tension between the unified whole and the uncontrollable fragment, maintaining both history and self in a state of flux. Broadhead's concluding vision of a Romantic history 'cracking open the surface of history to create a multi-levelled narrative, comprised not only of what could or should have happened but also what did happen, as well as the different symbolic meanings and historical archetypes that accrue to past events' strikingly resembles Groom's catachtonic Romanticism. Our collection begins and ends with a new historiography in and of the early nineteenth century which offers a glimpse of alternative Romanticisms.

The essays in this special issue of *Romanticism*, whilst offering fresh perspectives on the field, remain stubbornly analogue. That is, they do not attend to

the digital turn in humanities research that has been developing over the course of the last decade and more. More recently, Edge Hill's Romanticism seminar series and our follow-up symposium, 'Romanticism Takes to the Hills', held in 2017 at Edge Hill University, have both seen digital projects come to the fore, with presentations from Matthew Sangster on his 'Romantic London' project (<http://www.romanticlondon.org>), Simon White on 'Mapping Magic' (<https://www.historypin.org/en/mapping-magic>), Brennan Sadler launching her digital edition of 'Tintern Abbey' (<http://www.tinternabbeypoem.com>), and Christopher Donaldson and Jo Taylor introducing their project producing a 'deep map' of the lake district (<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/lakesdeepmap>). Sangster showcased both literary and non-literary treatments of the Romantic-period capital, arguing that, whereas poetry and prose tended to view the city as suspect, new travelogues and tourist accounts transformed London into a consumable object. White contextualised the short fiction of James Hogg in the landscape and folk culture of the Scottish borders. Sadler produced a multimedia account of the sights, sounds, and context of Wordsworth's poem. Donaldson and Taylor situated their 'deep mapping' as a development of eighteenth-century accounts of place, demonstrating how their innovative approach to cartography could lead to a renewed focus on the material terrain of Coleridge's poetry or the letters of Dorothy Wordsworth. All of these projects combine new digital techniques with a profound sensitivity to the significance of place in Romantic studies and deserve their place at the cutting edge of the discipline. The essays in this special issue contribute to this developing discussion in their own attention to the alternative spaces of Romanticism, located at geographical, temporal, bibliographic, and psychological edges.