

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD: THE PRESIDENT'S COLLEGE

## THE ROMANTICS Some Suggestions for Reading

### GENERAL

We are just a few weeks away from the beginning of the President's College's exciting program in the Romantics. Now is the time to start your reading in preparation for the courses. To help you along, we have compiled the following suggestions for reading.

As the noted scholar of Romantic poetry Stuart Curran has recently pointed out, study of the English Romantics has undergone radical changes in recent years. We are witnessing "a revolution in process," he says. While the pantheon of major poets – Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats – continues to hold the attention of scholars, the field has broadened to include numbers of lesser writers, and particularly numbers of women writers. We are also seeing a more comprehensive effort to set the literature of the period in its social and economic context: the Romantic Revolution and the Industrial Revolution are related phenomena.

It goes without saying that the best place for your reading to start is with the poets themselves. There are numerous anthologies of English Romantic poetry readily available, but those who are interested in looking at some of the people previously seldom included in surveys of the Romantics might take a look at:

Duncan Wu, ed. *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology*. Oxford and Malden MA: Blackwell. 1997.

Andrew Ashfield, ed. *Romantic Women Poets, 1770-1838*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

If you are looking to get a general understanding of the English poets of the period and their aesthetic and spiritual contribution, you will find much to ponder in two of Meyer Abrams' magisterial works (the second is perhaps the more broadly suggestive and is a helpful way into the poetry of Wordsworth):

M.H.Abrams. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. 1953

M.H.Abrams. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: Norton: 1971.

Anchoring the Romantics rather firmly in the figure of Blake, the following offers an interpretation of the six poetic "greats" of the period:

Harold Bloom. *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1971.

The shift from eighteenth-century poetry to the Romantics is discussed in

Thomas Woodman, ed. *Early Romantics: Perspectives in British Poetry from Pope to Wordsworth*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

If you're getting ready to go off to England to follow in the footsteps of the English Romantics, try the relevant sections in:

Margaret Drabble. *A Writer's Britain: Landscape in Literature*. London: Thames & Hudson. 1979.

Grevel Lindop. *A Literary Guide to the Lake District*. London: Chatto & Windus. 1993.

## IDEAS AND DEFINITION

Getting a sense of the Romantic movement as a whole – Continental as well as British, artistic and philosophical as well as literary – is a more daunting prospect. A book that gives us a sense of how the visual arts emerged into Romanticism is:

Kenneth Clark. *The Romantic Rebellion: Romantic versus Classic Art*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Two books, among many, deal with the relationship between Romanticism and industrialization. The first is a study of the link between landscape on the one hand and political ideology on the other, and the second is an anthology of writing exemplifying ways in which people looked at the encroachment of industry on nature:

Ann Bermingham. *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740-1860*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986

Alasdair Clayre, ed. *Nature and Industrialization*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1977.

See also:

Charlotte Klonk. *Science and the Perception of Nature: British Landscape Art in the Late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1996.

Bermingham and Klonk are two of what is a large body of studies of landscape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: how people conceive of the natural world tells us a lot about how they locate themselves in the world as a whole. Our relationship to the natural world – at the very time when the natural world was eroding – is of course central to the aesthetic concerns of the era. Getting a sense of where Romanticism came from, what other currents were operating at the time, and how Romanticism became transformed into the industrialized and the modern can be grasped through three recent books, two dealing largely with the eighteenth century and one with the nineteenth:

John Brewer. *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997

Roy Porter. *The Creation of the Modern World: The British Enlightenment*. New York: Norton, 2000

Paul Johnson. *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830*.  
New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Several books deal with the connection between Romanticism and overseas expansion, notably:

Saree Makdisi. *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1998

Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson. *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1998.

On Romanticism and war, see

Philip Shaw, ed. *Romantic Wars: Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1789-1823*. London: Ashcroft, 2000

A quirky but entertaining treatment of the relationship among science, the visual arts and poetry is:

Ruthven Todd. *Tracks in the Snow*. London: Grey Walls, 1946.

The relevant sections of the following will provide a brief overview of the main intellectual currents:

Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish. *The Western Intellectual Tradition*.  
London: Hutchinson, 1960.

A whole generation of British students read

Mario Praz. *The Romantic Agony*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1933

and were changed by the experience. The book deals with major images and themes of the period. Finally, the following books offer, respectively, a selection of key documents relating to the idea of Romanticism, continental and British, and a selection of key opinions on what constitutes Romanticism by modern literary scholars:

John B. Halsted, ed. *Romanticism*. London: Macmillan, 1969

Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe, ed. *Romanticism: Points of View*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

## **ART**

There is of course a wealth of literature on the great artists of the period, particularly John Constable and J.M.W. Turner. A major exhibition of Turner's watercolors is now going on at the Royal Academy and a book-cum-catalogue has been published for the occasion:

Eric Shanes. *Turner: The Great Watercolours*. London: Royal Academy, 2000.

The authoritative and comprehensive studies of the work of Constable and Turner, all published in New Haven by Yale U P, are:

Graham Reynolds. *The Earlier Paintings and Drawings of John Constable*. 1996

Graham Reynolds. *The Later Paintings and Drawings of John Constable*. 1984

Martin Butlin & Evelyn Joll. *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner*. 1984.

A more portable study of Constable is:

Michael Rosenthal. *Constable: The Painter and His Landscape*.  
New Haven: Yale U P, 1983.

On continental art and its background, see:

William Vaughan. *German Romantic Painting*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Haven:  
Yale U P, 1994

Matthew Craske. *Art in Europe 1700-1830*. Oxford: Oxford U P,  
1997

Anita Brookner. *Romanticism and Its Discontents*. London and New  
York: Viking, 2000

Brookner's book has stirred up a good deal of controversy and may be quite misleading, but it is apparently a good read on the French Romantics.

One of the great portraitists of the eighteenth century (along with Gainsborough and Reynolds) was George Romney, born in the Lake District and given special emphasis in the collections at Abbot Hall, Kendal, which the President's College tour to the Lakes will visit. If precursors to the Romantics have a place here, we should mention a new biography:

David A. Cross. *A Striking Likeness: The Life of George Romney*.  
London: Ashgate, 1999.

## BLAKE

Poet, painter, visionary, Blake transformed his intellectual inheritance in startling ways. There are numbers of collections of his poetry, including an edition of *The Complete Poems* edited by W.H.Stevenson (London: Longman; New York: Norton, 1971), *Complete Poetry and Prose*, ed. David V. Erdman, Harold Bloom, and William Golding (rev. edn. New York: Anchor), and *The Complete Writings*, the Oxford Standard Authors edition, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1966). Oxford also has a good paperback edition of the *Selected Poetry*, ed. Michael Mason (1994; paper 1998).

A difficult but illuminating book on the poetry is Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1947). On the visionary tradition leading to Blake and beyond, see Joseph Wittreich, ed., *Milton and the Line of Vision* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975). See also Bloom, above, and also Todd, above. A new biography of Blake as artist is Michael Phillips, *William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton U P). Princeton, which seems to run a small Blake industry, has published *The Illuminated Books of William Blake* in six

volumes over the past several years. They are all available in paperback, and they include Andrew Lincoln, ed. *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1991). A fuller treatment of Blake the artist is a new volume in Princeton's British Artists Series: William Vaughan, *William Blake* (1999).

The recent Tate Gallery exhibition has led to a handsome catalogue, with contributions from some well-known writers: Peter Ackroyd, Marilyn Butler, Robin Hamlyn, and Michael Phillips, *William Blake: Chambers of the Imagination* (London: Tate Gallery, 2000).

## WORDSWORTH

For the course on Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* we are recommending the Oxford U P paperback edited by W.J.B.Owen (1969), because it sets the poems out pretty much as they originally appeared in 1798, but several collections of Wordsworth's poetry contain his contributions to the collection (i.e. everything except Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"). The Oxford Standard Authors edition of Wordsworth's poetry is hard to read (small print, two columns); if you want to plunge into Wordsworth in a big way, go for the Yale edition of the poems, edited by John O. Hayden (1981). The collection originally appeared in Britain in a two-volume Penguin edition in 1977. There is a new paperback, *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000), which includes the major prose works as well as a wide selection of the poetry..

Wordsworth's brilliant autobiographical poem *The Prelude* is hard to handle textually because it exists in three versions, from 1799, 1805 and 1850. So we are recommending that people taking our course use the Norton Critical Edition, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H.Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979). Not only does it set the 1805 and 1850 versions out as parallel texts, but it also offers the shorter, fragmentary *Prelude* of 1799 and includes some useful criticism.

An exhibition at the New York Public Library some years ago resulted in a lucid and comprehensive book on Wordsworth and his background: Jonathan Wordsworth, Michael C. Jaye, and Robert Woof, *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers U P, 1987).

Generally regarded as the best of the Wordsworth biographies is Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1990). Much less reliable, though widely available, is Kenneth R. Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy* (New York: Norton, 1998). John L. Mahoney, *William Wordsworth: A Poetic Life* (New York: Fordham U P, 1997) is more focused on the poetry. A major new biography, very positively reviewed in Britain but, oddly, apparently still not available in this country is Juliet Barker, *Wordsworth: A Life* (London and New York: Viking).

Anyone wishing to plunge into Wordsworth's voluminous letters can seek out the four-volume edition of *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by Ernest de Selincourt and revised by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1988). The journals of Dorothy (Wordsworth's sister) were edited by de Selincourt in two volumes (London: Macmillan, 1959), but there is a more readily available paperback version of *The Grasmere Journals*, edited by Pamela Woof (Oxford and New York: Oxford U P, 1991). A very readable selection from the journals, along with some of William's poetry, is *Home at Grasmere*, edited by Colette Clark (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960). See also the attractively illustrated edition of Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour of Scotland*, ed. Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven: Yale U P, 1997).

## COLERIDGE

Coleridge's sprawling *oeuvre*, consisting of lectures, essays, philosophical works, literary musings, and, of course, poetry, is being gradually pulled together by the Bollingen Press (Princeton U P) in sixteen large volumes, the first of which appeared in the 1970s. There are numbers of convenient editions of the poetry readily available. Coleridge's major prose work, the *Biographia Literaria*, was published by Princeton in 1983 as a part of the Coleridge series. The most significant poems are brought together with the *Biographia Literaria* and other prose works in a new paperback volume, *The Major Works*, ed. H.J.Jackson (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000).

Way back in 1927, John Livingston Lowes attempted, memorably, to probe the complexities of Coleridge's thought and, particularly, to unravel the mysteries of "Kubla Khan" in *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination*. An attractive little book on Coleridge as poet and thinker is Humphry House, *Coleridge* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953). A new biography, much acclaimed, is Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections 1804-1834* (1998; New York: Pantheon, 2000), a sequel to Holmes's *Coleridge: Early Visions 1772-1804* (1989; New York: Pantheon, 1999).

## BYRON

People have been gathering Byron's writings and producing biographies of him almost from the beginning. His complete poetical works are accessible in several editions, selections from his letters and journals were brought together by Thomas Moore as early as 1830 and they were published in much more complete form in six large volumes, along with seven volumes of poetry, by John Murray between 1898 and 1904. A further collection of *Correspondence* followed in 1922, and more came with the publication of the Marchesa Iris Origo's *Byron: The Last Attachment* (1949) about his time in Italy.

There is an Oxford Standard Authors edition of Byron's poetry, and recently Oxford has come out with *The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford and New York: Oxford U P, 2000). There is a recent study of the poetry, Peter W. Graham, *Lord Byron* (Twayne, 1998). The standard biography is Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography* (New York, 1957). See also Derek Parker, *Byron and His World* (New York, 1968).

## SHELLEY

The *Complete Poems* are available in a Modern Library edition of 1994 and there are numbers of other editions, including an Oxford Standard Authors edition. Biographies began early: there are several 19<sup>th</sup>-century efforts. The standard biography is *Shelley*, published in a revised edition in 1947 by N.I.White. There has been extensive study of Shelley and his circle, primarily by Kenneth Neill Cameron, who has written illuminatingly about Shelley's political background. See Cameron's *The Young Shelley* (1950), *Shelley and His Circle* (four volumes, 1961, 1970) and *Shelley: The Golden Years* (1974). Shelley's thought and aesthetic theory have been much discussed. Harold Bloom remains among the most perceptive critics of the poetry. See *The Visionary Company*, above. For a recent collection of criticism, see Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran, ed. *Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1996).

## KEATS

Keats's short life is extremely well documented, thanks to the work of numbers of scholars. Hyder E. Rollins pulled together much of the material relating to the people around Keats in his large compilation *The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1948), and

went on to edit *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1958), which offers very readable insight into Keats's complex character. Walter Jackson Bate made extensive use of the letters in his superb *John Keats* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1963), which some regard as one of the finest literary biographies ever. It has never been bettered, though there are recent, readable biographies by Andrew Motion (*Keats*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998) and Stephen Coote (*John Keats: A Life*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995). Christopher Ricks offers a sensitive and perceptive reading of the poems, tied in with the biography, in *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1976). See also Helen Vendler's splendid *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1983).

Editions are numerous. Since there are relatively few textual problems, one is pretty much as good as another, though Miriam Allott's *The Complete Poems* (London: Longman, 1970) has good notes and a clean text. Jack Stillinger's, *The Poems of John Keats* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1978), is the most authoritative edition. There is also a nice little edition of *The Selected Letters* by Lionel Trilling (Doubleday, 1951).

The traveler will want to look at Carol Kyros Walker, *Walking North with Keats* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1992), about his walking tour of northern England, Scotland and Ireland, undertaken with his friend Charles Brown in 1818. The book is illustrated with stunning photographs by the author.

## OTHER WRITERS

Obviously the above suggestions merely scratch the surface. Nor can one get a comprehensive grasp of the Romantic period without digging into the prose – notably the novels of Amelia Opie, Anne Radcliffe, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley and others (the men, it seems, write the poems and the women write the novels: we need both to understand what is going on).

Mary Shelley, particularly, is a figure of major importance to an understanding of Romanticism. *Frankenstein* (available in a Norton Critical Edition, ed. J. Paul Hunter), more than any other work of imaginative literature, brings together the themes and fears behind Romanticism – industrialization, alienation, science, the Gothick, the myth of Prometheus. No wonder that there is a huge literature on this novel. On Mary Shelley in general, see Betty T. Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1998), and a new biography, Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley* (London: John Murray, 2000).

Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, married the philosopher and novelist William Godwin and died shortly after the death of her daughter, leaving behind her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in a Norton Critical Edition edited by Carol H. Poston (New York, 1988). See Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1974).

Robert Southey, whose long narrative poems were highly thought of in his day, is not much read now – except for his historical works (there is a new edition of his *Life of Nelson*, for example: London: Constable, 1999). For a biography, see Mark Storey, *Robert Southey: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1997).

The critic William Hazlitt's *Selected Writings* are available in an Oxford edition, ed. John Cook (1999). The classic biography is Catherine Macdonald Maclean, *Born Under Saturn* (London: Collins, 1943). A recent much acclaimed study is Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).

Sir Walter Scott was immensely popular in his day, and numbers of his novels are still read. His narrative poems are available in a Signet edition as *The Lady of the Lake and Other Poems* (1962).

Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings* is available in an Oxford paperback (1999).

Since the President's College tour of the Lake District will also visit John Ruskin's house, Brantwood, across the lake from Coniston, we should end by mentioning, in connection with this clearly Victorian (and currently much studied) figure, a new and much praised two-volume biography by Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years*, and *John Ruskin: The Later Years*. Both were published by Yale U P, both in 2000.

**Humphrey Tonkin**

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**(Corrections and suggestions for additions or changes to this draft are very welcome)**