

Change Time: Timing and Placing Late Romanticism

It is Change time, and I am strangely among the Elgin marbles. It was no hyperbole when I ventured to compare the change in my condition to a passing into another world. (Lamb 1825, 72)

Much in scholarship may spring from a fortuitous anniversary, especially if its significance is underscored by perceived resonances between present and past. Inspired by the bicentennial of Waterloo and a range of momentous events that occurred in the later 1810s and 1820s, and looking forward to the decades to follow, critics have recently begun to note that these seemingly arbitrary dates, expanded into a loosely structured timespan that ranges from 1815 through the late 1840s, hold considerable interest, in that they are recognised to constitute a “self-conscious age of proliferating information” and “a self-defined age-in-formation” (Esterhammer 2020, 26) that echoes our own historical moment. Coincident with this surging interest, scholars have also increasingly understood that the habitual frames and models of Romantic, Victorian and (long-)nineteenth-century criticism fall short of these decades, awkwardly positioned as they are between curricula and conventional periodisations, and curiously insistent on their own transitoriness and secondariness. The late 1810s through 1840s appear to be instinct with their own identity; premised on the Romantic period that precedes these decades, yet sufficiently different to merit a distinct label. A number of phrases to separate out the post-1815 years have accordingly seen increased currency: these range from references to the decades involved, with the 1820s presently coming in for particular attention; over constructions that front questions of periodicity, like Romantic Victorianism; to circumlocutions that depend on a suitably dramatic event, including post-Waterloo, post-Peterloo or post-Byron Romanticism. Among these terms, each expressive of distinct critical perspectives and agendas, and each inscribed with the unspoken presumption that the trajectory of British literary historiography suffices for the description of a transnational cultural phenomenon, the designation that has seen the greatest circulation is the usefully capacious, if presently somewhat nondescript *late Romanticism*.

Notwithstanding reservations regarding the “lumbering reifications” (Cronin 2002, 4) of de-

finitive names, dates, and places, the various labels that have been deployed do hold significant heuristic value in that they name a sense of difference that is noted both by current observers and by contemporary commentators. Late Romanticism, that is, extends and intensifies one of the few unifying characteristics of Romanticism; its conflicted insistence on itself as a period. Romanticism may be “diffuse in its origins and [...] differentiated in its national and regional manifestations” (Duff et al. 2021, 272), and deeply aware of this diffusion and differentiation, but it also understands itself to represent a moment that is fundamentally dissimilar from what has gone before, and thereby grants itself circular coherence as “the age of the spirit of the age.” (Chandler 1998, 105) Late Romanticism reinforces this habit of historicity in that it presents as a period within a period; a subperiod that perpetuates but complicates and modulates Romantic ideas and ideals. Late Romanticism, then, as Geoffrey Hartman remarks of Wordsworth’s later poetry, stages a series of “strange happenings” and bestows upon itself “a peculiarity all its own” (1987, 331). Such strange happenings, Tim Fulford notes, as he also ponders Wordsworth’s later writings, “disconfirmed some of the most prominent Romantic motifs” and in so doing assumes a peculiar tonality, a set of “distinctive measures.” (2013, 21) It is this historicist valency, born of retrospection on the Romanticism that was, combined with reflection on what Romanticism can still hope to be, that lends late Romanticism its current importance.

The dis/continuity of the later 1810s through the 1840s is perhaps best captured by the rubric of late Romanticism, which leverages its adjective to name a subperiod that inhabits, if in a self-consciously disjointed and disjoining fashion, a broader epoch. Partly because it operates as a calque of the German *Spätromantik*, which has been richly considered and theorised (Schmidt 2009), the phrase has the additional advantage of priming scholarship to challenge the temporal and spatial constraints placed upon Romantic studies. If a certain belatedness can be argued to inhere in all Romanticism, which often adopts the register of anticipative retrospection (Rohrbach 2015), even to the point of speaking posthumously (Bennett 1999), this tendency grows even more meaningful as the period moves into its waning decades and as it translates itself transnationally, in that all national varietals except for the German and perhaps the British (Hutchinson 2016, 31–35) are deeply cognisant of their arriving behind their exemplars. The primary aim of the present essay is to begin stabilising the latter half of the Romantic period by

labelling this amorphous subperiod as late Romanticism, and to anchor this equally undecided phrase by situating its times and places. In so doing, the following paragraphs also seek to act on late Romanticism's capacity to unsettle and reconfigure assumptions that have shaped Romantic and nineteenth-century studies.

1. The Demise of Romanticism

One aspect noted by all critics who study late Romanticism, even if they do not yet consistently deploy that term, is that it has been severely underexamined. "In comparison with such well-established parallels as late modernism and late capitalism," as Thomas Ford notes, "late Romanticism has been [...] a rather underdeveloped category of cultural history." (2021, 187–188) Such declarations of scholarly insufficiency amount to a standard opening gesture: given the difficulty of securely dating or locating the transition of Romanticism into late Romanticism, one way of fixing the latter is to approach it through the scant scholarly interest which it has heretofore attracted; its marginality, then, is virtually constitutive. Late Romanticism is nearly inherently "a no-man's land that no one is fighting for" (Tucker 522); an "indeterminate borderland" (Salmon 2013, 8) whose map may best be drawn by noting its "neglect[] by Victorianists and Romanticists alike." (Cronin 2002, 2) This unenviable critical status, and the repeated allusions to that status, can be traced back to Virgil Nemoianu's precursor study of pan-European late Romanticism, which founds its proposal for a transnational Biedermeier on the observation that the years between 1815 and 1848 constitute "an embarrassment to the historian of English literature." (1984, 41) This embarrassment has a double valency: it holds both for literary historiographers, who have little to divulge on the subperiod; and for its writers, who appear to have produced little that is worthwhile. Crucially, these two findings also reinforce each other. In positing, even if it is to disagree, that late Romanticism marks a "low Romanticism" (Nemoianu 2006, ix), a "trivial Romanticism" (Mehring 2010, 11) or a "watered-down variety of Romanticism" which "could come up with no more than ephemera" (Esterhammer 2020, 5) and "prefers [...] the *beautiful* to the sublime" (Sweet 1994, 170), critics repeat the rhetoric of the texts which they read. If the 1820s and beyond designate "a period of doubt," they do so both in that

their critical standing is unsteady, and in that those who experienced these decades *themselves* vocally “doubted whether they might come to form a ‘period.’” (Stewart 2018, 8) It is precisely this reciprocity of doubt that “contribute[s] to,” or rather subtends, “the era’s characteristic profile.” (Esterhammer 2020, 7) This discourse, which imparts a striking inflection of abnegation to the Romantic practice of performative self-historicisation, is especially prominent amongst the poets and amongst those who write about poetry. In an 1832 contribution to *The New Monthly*, Letitia Elizabeth Landon remarks on the changed conditions for the poetical class by noting that “[w]e ourselves are standing on the threshold of a new era,” to be characterised by the decentering of high literature. If late Romanticism has an overarching identity, then, it is “a base macadamizing spirit.” (1832, 417; see Stewart 2018, 5)

To argue that a counter-poetic spirit is fundamental to late Romanticism, in spite of its professed aspirations to the contrary, is to set up an unflattering comparison between Romanticism and “the new era” that follows it: the late-Romantic present is cast as a disappointment, and described through a twinned rhetoric of afterness and mournfulness. This discourse grounds much Romantic writing, which often situates itself in an after period—“that time is past, / And all its aching joys are now no more, / And all its dizzy raptures.” (Wordsworth 1798, 206, ll. 85–87) Even so, such poetical belatedness acquires new force in a context in which poetry itself appears to have grown outmoded. Belatedness, specifically channelled through a rhetoric of afterness, accordingly predominates in French Romanticism and other national or regional branches which are late to integrate the Romantic revolution, emerging in the 1830s or even in the very final decades of the nineteenth century. Such lateness may be attributed to the tenacity of neoclassicist canons of taste; moreover, for a number of minor languages and literatures like Flemish, considerable labour was required through work through a long history of minority if not outright suppression of a local literature and language, a process of anamnesis that moves between manifestation (Leerssen 2004) and recolonisation (Aravamudan 2003). Having shed the strictures of eighteenth-century writing several years behind their German and British counterparts, French writers know themselves to have belatedly broken into a period that has already been debased: “what unlucky poets we are to have been born at this time where there is no more poetry!” (Gautier 1880 [1832], 14; qtd. Hutchinson 2016, 63) A similar sense of afterness weighs heavily

on British and German late-Romantic writers, with the added sting that a timely greatness had been achieved, if regrettably not to be perpetuated, in these literatures. The final years of German Romanticism title themselves as an *Epigonentum*, a secondary era of derivation and imitation that cannot hope to transcend, as Karl Immermann comments in a letter that summarises his novel *Die Epigonen*,

the blessing and curse [*Segen und Unsegen*] of being born afterwards [*Nachgeborens*]
[...] The legacy of [our precursors'] achievements is easy for us to take up [*liegt zu leichtem Antritt uns bereit*]; it is in this sense that we are epigones. (Immermann 1981 [1830], 669; qtd. Hutchinson 2016, 96)

Briefly interrupting an essay on “Mr. Coleridge” to contrast his own moment with the gallery of remarkable men of letters that compose his *Spirit of the Age*, William Hazlitt similarly notes his irrepressible epigonality:

the present is an age of talkers, and not of doers; and the reason is, that the world is growing old. [...] we live in retrospect, and doat [*sic*] on past achievements. [...] What niche remains unoccupied? What path untried? What is the use of doing anything, unless we could do better than all those who have gone before us? What hope is there of this? We are like those who have been to see some noble monument of art, who are content to admire without thinking of rivalling it; or like guests after a feast [...] or like the spectators of a mighty battle, who still hear its sound afar off. (1825, 56)

The nebulous diagnosis of *Nachgeborens* and consequent *Epigonentum* to which Immermann and Hazlitt advert is given a more distinct outline through a rhetoric of mournfulness; that is, by structuring descriptions of the present around the demise of a great poet who becomes representative of Romantic ideas and ideals. Events of particular resonance include the death of Goethe (1832) and the series of deaths that hit British Romanticism from the 1820s onwards—Keats (1821), Shelley (1822), Byron (1824), Scott (1832), and Coleridge (1834). In a lecture at the Royal Institution in which he evaluates the current state of British literature, repurposing Edmund Burke to argue that [t]he age of poetry is gone; that of economists and calculators has succeeded,” James Montgomery concretises his glum assessment through a long list of spent poets. Even those authors who are as yet alive should be ranked with the dead: “Southey and

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Campbell and Moore, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron [...] down to Robert Bloomfield and John Clare [...] like the songsters of last spring, when autumn comes over the woods [...] of these we are compelled to say, that they are all now moulting or dead.” (1837, 1–3) In this depressive inventory, it is especially the untimely deaths that confirm the flow of history is now against Romanticism, which has so exhausted itself that it can no longer sustain even its junior disciples. The passing of Byron in 1824, in particular, is almost immediately identified by contemporary writers as the *terminus ad quem* of the high-Romantic spirit, partly in that it reinforces the shock of Shelley’s drowning in 1822. Acting the part of a writer falling into lateness, interrupted mid-paragraph by a sudden realisation of terminal literary decline, Hazlitt emblematises how the historiography of late Romanticism is made to pivot on the poet’s death. As he considers Byron’s ongoing mission to Greece amid its war of independence, and learns of the poet’s death at Missolonghi, his writing is rudely interrupted, recovering to find itself in a new era. This epochal transition is graphically signposted by a blank, a row of spaced asterisks, another blank, and the resumption of writing, albeit in a reconfigured temporality: “We had written *thus* far when news came of the death of Lord Byron, and put an end at once to a stream of somewhat peevish invective [...] Lord Byron is dead.” (1825, 166–167) Naming the impact that Hazlitt leaves implied, Thomas Beddoes records that the “disappearance of Shelley from the world, seems, like the tropical setting of that luminary [...] to which his poetical genius can alone be compared with reference to the companions of his day.” (1923 [1825], 2–3; qtd. Hutchinson 2016, 47) In a similar vein, and rendering fully explicit the larger historical plan that is confirmed by her husband’s death, Mary Shelley couches her personal experience in the inevitability of late Romanticism: “[m]ethinks I was born to that end alone, since all events seem to ~~drag~~ lead me to that one point. Father, Mother, friend, husband children—all made—as it were—the team that ~~dragged me~~ conducted me here, & now all [...] are gone, and I am left to fulfil my task.” (1987 [1822], 2.432) In occupying a time determined to be after, this task could not but be lesser: late-Romantic authors regard themselves as minor creatures; no longer aspiring to original creation, but reconciled to participating in ancillary and peripheral genres intent on commemorating and canonising, chief among them biographies, recollections, and reminiscences. (Higgins 2015, 60–89)

The poetical deaths on which the transition of high to late Romanticism is mythologised to turn are just one set among many indices which have been proposed. Other dates proliferate: every year between 1815 and 1848 has been in contention—“1824, 1825, 1830, 1832, 1837, or [...] an earlier or later year” (Ford 2021, 187)—for its symbolisation of some portentous national or international event: the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, the opening of the first fully steam-operated English railway in 1825, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the passing of the Reform Act in 1832, the crash of 1837, and so on. Much like the thanatographic history of Romanticism written through the deaths of its poetical exponents, each of these suggested years attempts at reducing an accelerating series of social, cultural and political changes to a watershed moment so as to gain purchase on the “fundamental component of the episteme” of late Romanticism, which “is the discourse of change itself.” (Esterhammer 2020, 26) Each date does so by referring change to an organic and generational definition of historicity, marshalling alleged break-points to install a tri- or biphasic paradigm that is modelled on the life of the individual, passing through an early stage of youthful enthusiasm, thence moving into mature self-possession, and finally winding down to melancholy retrospection. (McMullan 2007, 138) If Romanticism may best be defined as the period that defined periodicity, and “altered our understanding of temporality” (Redfield 2003, 33–34) through a “radical historiographical transformation” (Chandler 1998, 100), *late* Romanticism at once confirms and imparts a new dynamic to such performative historicity by timing itself through an eventual organisation of history, and locating itself at the end of that history. This template has been persuasive enough to be replicated across many a literary or cultural history. When Jerome Christensen claims that Romanticism may be seen to split into two —into an effervescent phase of confident and optimistic creation, and a listless phase of hesitant and dejected reproduction, coinciding with the resurgence of reactionary conservatism following a spell of utopian progressivism— he traces this cleavage to an event of abscission, arguing that Waterloo marks the juncture at which Romanticism breaks with itself. (2000, 3–8) Christensen’s suggested date has the advantage of translating well across Europe, where the second defeat of Napoleon was widely seen to lay to rest any hopes for true change, even if the ramifications of Waterloo were slower to be grasped than the poetical deaths that countersigned the transformation of the spirit of the age. Heeding this historiographic design,

Montgomery attributes the physical or spiritual deaths of the British poets to a historical plan set in motion by the event at Waterloo, noting that British culture suffered a ten-year deterioration following that event and its reconfiguration of a suitably impassioned wartime into a much duller peacetime. That is, “[t]he transition from war to peace, in 1815, was like returning from romance to reality,” even if Britain did not fully wake to its having lapsed into lateness until at least ten years after, since it was “in 1825, when the tremendous visitation had wholly passed away from the political system.” (1837, 2–4) Preferring a dramatic volte-face akin to the sudden breakdown imagined by Hazlitt over Montgomery’s thesis of a slow background decline, François-René de Chateaubriand reflects in his *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave* that the disintegration of the Napoleonic vision for France and Europe was as traumatising as it was sudden:

[t]o plunge [*retomber*] from Bonaparte and the Empire into what followed them, is to plunge from reality into nothingness, from the summit of a mountain into the gulf. Did everything not end with Bonaparte? Ought I to speak of anything else? What could be of interest after him? Can there be any question of who or what, in the wake of such a man? (2005 [1839], xxv.1.1; qtd. Hutchinson 2016, 37)

Late Romanticism, in short, renders tractable the changes that define it through an eventual construction of history, marshalling these rifts and breaks to anchor a sense of an ending.

2. A Remediated Romanticism

In recent years, the melancholy perspective on the late-Romantic transition voiced by those who systematise their cultural histories around poets’ experiences has increasingly been opposed by readings which look beyond the falling fortunes of high literature. While the eventuation of late Romanticism may be seen to turn on a wide range of incidents, what underpins many of these is a formidable print-cultural transformation; nothing short of a “revolution in the republic of letters,” as Thomas De Quincey puts it. (1891 [1821–59], 1.165) This reconfigured and reimagined cultural system amply compensates for the destruction of extant modes by offering new options. If “John Murray refused any manuscripts of poetry after Byron’s death” or “Longman said ‘nobody wants poetry now’ and encouraged authors to write cookbooks instead” (Ericson 1996, 26), it is because even as poetry was increasingly sidelined in cultural and commercial terms

(Poovey 2008, 286), an energetic field of periodical publication emerged to take over its organising functions, so much so that late Romanticism may be equated to “an age of the magazine.” (Stewart 2011, 208) While magazines predated the endings that define late Romanticism, their number, circulation, prestige and readership were greatly expanded from 1815 as printing costs fell, printing speeds rose, literacy increased, and nations across Europe once more found themselves open for international business and communication even if presses remained under varying degrees of governmental control. As periodicals busily conversed amongst themselves, they knit a space in which regional and national lines of contact (Atkinson 2017) aggregated into “a network society” (Castells 1996) mirrored by communication across classes and disciplines. The transnational valency of these periodical networks was especially important, and is demonstrated by the trend in many periodicals to position themselves vis-à-vis their competitors by broadcasting their international credentials (France 2010), in part through such new or revitalised genres as the travel report; the partial or complete (pseudo)translation; the (imagined) letter to or from representatives of other nations; and the review detailing the literary, philosophical, cultural or scientific exploits of other nations. (Saglia 2018) Through such forms, late-Romantic magazines put under pressure national constructions of Romanticism by attending to questions of linguistic and cultural difference. They may be seen to gesture at a transnational Romanticism, in which texts inhabit a space beyond the confines of any one nation, and authorship is no longer to be premised on originality but on mediation. (de Groote 2021) While the implications for Romanticist criticism of the ascendancy of the “lower empire” of periodicals (Schoenfield 2009) have sparked much scholarly attention (Parker 2009), their impact on the periodisation and localisation of late Romanticism was equally considerable.

If late Romanticism marks the decline of one strand within Romanticism, it also names the growth of several others. The explosion of para-literary publications—biographies that commodified literary lives for public consumption (North 2009, 31–43); florilegia of poetry marketed to previously underserved audiences; guidebooks to sublime and picturesque locations, which Wordsworth contributed to as he entered his “second generation” (Cox 2021; Fulford 2013, 205–278)—demonstrate the emergence of a public sphere premised on a new understanding of media. If critics have been slow to read late Romanticism on its own terms, it is precisely

because it invested in these genres and forms which suited its context but fall outside a relatively rarified construction of Romantic-period culture. By the same token, the ongoing resurgence of late Romanticism proceeds from bicentennial motives as much as it does from our current experience of another moment whose changes are determined by a reconfiguration of informational structures and processes, in which a previously dominant structuration of culture is up-ended. Such echoes become all the more compelling when late Romanticism is approached on its own terms; that is, through a book-historical or media-theoretical lens—as the moment where Romanticism confronts the supplantation of its cultural model, organised around the supremacy of poetry and the visionary author, and begins to consider itself as a “new media ecology.” (Mole 2017, 15–20) While it has been argued that a true “concept of a medium of communication” emerged only in the late nineteenth century (Guillory 2010, 321), in that a concept of mediation cannot spring from an undifferentiated media space that is ruled by print alone, the decades after 1815 manifestly see the inception of new and functionally distinct forms of print, in addition to an increasingly complex and processual understanding of mediation and information. Late Romanticism marks the expansion of the periodical press and its creative capabilities; it also marks the invention of the very notion of news. Wellington’s victory and Byron’s death are media events: it is not through direct experience but through the manifold reports of these events, in countless retellings and remediations, that writers like Hazlitt and Chateaubriand understood themselves to have entered a new period. (de Groote 2017) The rise of visual media is another key element; so much so that the publication of William Henry Fox Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–46) has been argued to constitute yet another juncture at which Romanticism grows late. (Hofkosh 2011) In short, late Romanticism demonstrates the growth of “an embryonic Romantic-age concept of media,” encouraged by a range of exhilarating new options which “opened up and dramatically expanded Romantic-age notions of what a medium could even be.” (Burkett 2016, 17; 3)

As they navigate a literary system that finds itself to have transformed into a media system, late-Romantic writers reimagine what it means to write, initially hedging their participation in new modes by wistfully reminiscing over a cultural model that is fast disappearing, but soon moving to critique its limitations, and founding on this corrective a redefined Romanticism. In

“The Super-Annuated Man,” Charles Lamb begins to explore what a late-Romantic writer might ambition, even if he or she is much reduced in authority, originality, and personality. Lamb’s essay presents a dissolved, quintessentially late-Romantic character (Cope 2018); a modest and entirely expendable company clerk who has recently retired, and who presently considers what task his life should now pursue. “It is Change time,” he reflects, as yet managing little more than noting the novelty of his condition, albeit in crucially open-ended fashion: “I am strangely among the Elgin marbles. It was no hyperbole when I ventured to compare the change in my condition to a passing into another world.” (1825, 72) As the new world gains in definition, its writers reclaim the secondariness they continue to profess through a strategy of retrospective competition, combining self-abnegating praise for a eulogised author with increasingly censorious comments on the latter’s fatal lack of realism. Yes, the poets were august creatures in whom “[p]oetry and philosophy had met together,” but their visionariness can now be recognised to have been undone by an overly personalised conception of authorship, which should be urgently amended to acknowledge the medial and sociable structures which writers are called to serve. “[R]eading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best” is ultimately to “loiter[] my life away” in abstruse experiments which fail to connect with audiences, especially in a republic of letters that has recently been revolutionised. (Hazlitt 1836 [1823], 285; 279) While this strategy of critical differentiation through imputations of detachment plays out across a wide range of genres, including Hazlitt’s essays and Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* (1994 [1826]), it is most poignant in biographies. Apparently concerned with preserving the legacy of great writers by recording the worshipful observations of a much less lionised friend, they soon veer towards auto/biography: biography, that is, yields to an impulse for automanifestation. (North 2009, 151–156) Thomas De Quincey’s recollections of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey are a case in point (2000–2003 [1834–1840]); John Edward Trelawny’s *Recollections of The Last Days of Shelley and Byron* demonstrate even more incisively the emergence of a self-possessed writerly voice from artfully inverted late-Romantic commemoration. Trelawny’s reminiscences are epigraphically larded with suitably belated verses—“Dust claims dust—and we die too,” “What is life, what is death / What are we,” and so on (1858, 92; 111). The book also perturbs this familiar melancholy by featuring a series of

sharply critical asides which reread high Romanticism as effete and unproductive when confronted with a world that has grown new. “You will do no good with Shelley,” Trelawny warns a naval officer who is about to embark with Shelley on his fatal boating trip, “until you heave his books and papers overboard,” (1858, 106) and thereby force the poet out of his solipsism to acknowledge the reality of his place and time. These cautions unheeded, Shelley’s boat founders in a storm: the author’s body is found with a “volume of Sophocles in one pocket, and Keats’s poems in the other, doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away;” (1858, 123) surprised mid-reading by an irruptive event. Significantly, in spite of eventuating Trelawny’s book and his late-Romantic identity, Shelley’s death is not represented, in that it takes place at sea, out of sight: this untold happening draws a dividing line that recalls Hazlitt’s performative pause. Crucially, Trelawny also acts beyond this brief suspension, highlighting his criticism of Romantic inaction in using the final third of his book to contrast his swashbuckling participation in the Greek war of independence to Byron’s and Shelley’s mere theorisations of political action; their tendency was always to be, as Hazlitt writes in sardonic exclamation, “[a]waiting the event!” (1825, 166) Shelley’s and Byron’s last days are followed by Trelawny’s first: in organising his text around the historiographic rupture of a great poet’s untimely yet inevitable death, Trelawny means to distinguish his era from the one previous, reclaiming late Romanticism as a fuller realisation of Romantic ideas and ideals.

3. A Limit Case for Romantic Studies

While late Romanticism has long been evaluated through the experiences of those authors who cleave closest to an idealised poetical paradigm, and has consequently often had its orientation towards the future dismissed, to do so is to privilege but one of the period’s discourses. In tracing an alternative set of sources, late Romanticism may be recognised to attach a double meaning to its position of posteriority. If the standard account of late Romanticism relies on a generational imagination of history, recently rebooted by the work of Edward Said (2006) and Linda and Michael Hutcheon (2015) on late style, a fuller appreciation of its stakes requires mapping the interleaving of this perspective with a competing, depersonalised take first proposed by Theodor Adorno (2002), recently updated by Khalip (2018), and given concrete grounding

through the mediatheoretical work of Friedrich Kittler (1990). It is precisely through its combination of a latter-day and a future-focused perspective that late Romanticism complicates familiar narratives, in ways that extend to debates regarding the future of Romantic studies, and indeed of the humanities at large. (Pozoukidis 2021) Late Romanticism figures as a limit case for Romanticism, and for Romantic studies: in timing and placing late Romanticism, we may begin to attain to a change time of our own.

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