

Zeiler also frequently uses terms without specifying amounts, percentages, or relative weights. Without specific numbers, the debates he covers on “preference margins” (33), “deficiency payments” (55), and “peril points” (85) too often sound like political quibbles. We need to know whose economic interests were involved, to what degree, in order to know whether the debates were significant.

Sadly, the editing of this book suggests a work rushed into print. The first page of the first chapter has Hitler’s name as “Adolph” (6). Words appear to have been dropped: “The Commonwealth, as well as Western European remained unmoved” (173). He refers to the Netherlands as “Holland” (173). Statistics are unclear. The Commonwealth states, for example, “increased their share of world exports 28 percent by 1948, whereas America’s share had dropped to less than 23 percent” (175). Did Commonwealth exports increase *by* 28 percent or *to* 28 percent?

In sum, although Zeiler has an important subject and his overall argument merits consideration, his book as a piece of scholarship is disappointing.

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

E. P. Thompson, *The Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age*. Foreword by Dorothy Thompson (New York: The New Press, 1997).

For the past twenty years or so, the study of romantic literature and culture has benefited from a strong turn to history, what came to be known, of course, as the “new historicism.” While one might characterize E. P. Thompson’s book on politics and romantic poetry as an example of the “old historicism,” his impressive body of work – particularly *The Making of The English Working Class* – has been a constant resource for new historicists seeking to understand romanticism’s engagement with history. James Chandler, who has provided many exemplars of historical literary scholarship, offers his *England in 1819* as a model for an even “newer historicism.” One hopes that these two different, fine books can give fresh impetus to the already strong scholarship engaged with the historical literary study of the romantic period at a moment when many seem to be wearying of history.

There are important points of contact between these two authors, one the leading historian of radicalism in the period, the other a key voice in romantic literary studies. Both books are interested in the ways in which romantic literature can be placed within its historical period. Both are committed to the

continuing liberatory power of romantic culture. Both locate this power in canonical writers rather than in figures on the margin of literary history. These are, however, quite different books. Thompson's book deals almost exclusively with the 1790s and their aftermath, while Chandler is interested in 1819 and, more generally, in the years after Waterloo, and he wishes to explore the culture of these years as doing something more than rehashing 1789; in other words, Thompson is concerned with what we usually call first generation romanticism while Chandler turns to the second, but he is concerned to see that later generation as distinct, different from the first and its moment. As we would expect from his earlier work, Thompson is interested in placing texts into contexts without addressing self-consciously the theoretical issues such a move raises; Chandler's book begins with a long theoretical discursus on the self-consciousness about historicism to be found in both modern scholarship and in the writers of 1819. While Thompson's book has only a smattering of footnotes and no index or table of contents, Chandler's book has such a comprehensive scholarly apparatus that it brought back to mind a friend in graduate school who, in order to understand where romantic criticism was in the 1970s, decided to spend a semester reading through the sources cited in the bibliographic essays included with the notes to Geoffrey Hartman's magisterial *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*: someone interested in understanding where historicist criticism is today could undertake a similar project with Chandler's generous notes. While both of these books are finally a pleasure to read, they read very differently. Thompson's book is made up largely of lectures and reviews, and it has the liveliness of writing for the moment; it can be read in a single reading. Chandler's book is a massively scholarly work that reads as something like the critical equivalent of the novels by one of his central figures here, Sir Walter Scott; the pleasures here come with slower reading, with reading by installments (made easier by a complex array of subdivisions), and the second half of the book is held together by the figure of Thomas Moore, in Chandler's account a sort of Waverley-like figure mixing with the historically great writers of the period.

Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age is an attempt to give us a sense of what Thompson's planned book on romanticism as a response to its historical moment would have looked like; it is in fact a collection of independent lectures, reviews, and essays that offer us a glimpse of the way in which he would have portrayed the literary and intellectual efforts of the generation that came of age in England along with the French Revolution. The book opens with a 1968 lecture on "Education and Experience," in which he argues for the mutually enriching dialogue that should be engaged between the kind of abstract, rational education identified with the university and the "customary experiential culture of the people" (19). The essay also introduces the hero of the book, Wordsworth, who is found to offer in his poetry a "cultural egalitarianism" at odds with both customary paternalism and a meaner, harsher paternalism that arose with the

spread of capitalism. As the figure who is best able to internalize the struggles of the 1790s into poetry, who manages to embody the glories and the miseries of that blissful dawn and its aftermath, Wordsworth is defined throughout the book in contrast to others who lived through the same tumultuous times and particularly to Godwin, Coleridge, and Thelwall.

If there is a villain in the book, beyond the forces of reaction then and now, it is Godwin (particularly in "Benevolent Mr. Godwin," 96-106), who is seen as offering an abstract, rational radicalism that ignores and sometimes opposes the radical culture that arises from the experience of the people. Thompson is rather severe with those scholars who have identified radicalism in the 1790s with Godwin and who have seen Wordsworth's rejection of Godwinism as a move from the "left to the right," where Thompson argues that Wordsworth moved from dry philosophical radicalism to a potentially radical identification with the experience of the common man. In Thompson's view, the problem arises when scholars pay "insufficiently close attention to the actual lived historical experience" (34), when they see figures such as Wordsworth representing complete philosophical arguments within an abstract history of ideas rather than engaging in the more messy business of responding to the various artistic, intellectual, personal, and political positions one learns from the books one reads and the people one knows, the positions one tries on and tries to live by. While Thompson does believe that Wordsworth after the Peace of Amiens turned from his earlier political beliefs and his embrace of cultural egalitarianism and while he will find in *The Excursion* of 1814 a later critique of the radical positions that had been held by men such as Thelwall and Wordsworth himself during the 1790s, Thompson wishes in the first instance to celebrate the fact that Wordsworth "upheld, through all the preceding fifteen years [before 1805], so great a confidence that 'fair seasons yet will come, and hopes as fair'" (62). Wordsworth, according to Thompson, was able to create great poetry out of the tension between his revolutionary, utopian aspirations and the harshness of contemporary reality, and he was able to do so because, while experiencing disenchantment, he did not (before 1805 at least) fall into apostasy, "a moral failure, and an imaginative failure" for it involves the denial of what one has been and experienced (37).

Coleridge and in a different way Thelwall are juxtaposed to Wordsworth as the great poet of revolutionary hope and disenchantment. After three pieces that focus on Wordsworth and one on Godwin, Thomson turns to Coleridge in three pieces that were originally reviews of successive volumes of his *Collected Works*. Moving from the Coleridge of the *Watchman*, to the author of the notebooks, to the political writer for the *Morning Post* and *Courier*, Thompson finds Coleridge more and more reprehensible as he becomes the apostate whose writings are "irresponsible and unprincipled" (152). Where Wordsworth followed "the difficult course of arguing the matter [of revolutionary hope and disenchantment] through, without caricaturing one's past allegiances or allies or

manipulating evidence” (149), Coleridge is revealed as a betrayer of principles and friends, as an ally of reactionary forces, as a weak political thinker, and as a bad political writer. If Coleridge is the great poet who betrays his political soul, Thelwall – in a final more scholarly essay, “Hunting the Jacobin Fox” (156-217) – appears as a strong political figure, who never betrays his past, but who never finds an adequate form within which to represent his response to the failure of revolutionary hopes in the 1790s. For Thompson, it is only Wordsworth who merges political experience with poetical mastery.

While these are separate pieces written over twenty-five years, they come together as Thompson seeks in each to explore the artistic, cultural, and political development of the generation that came of age in England with the French Revolution. The pieces are also held together by Thompson’s wit and his passion, by his ability to be simultaneously generous and strongly critical of other scholars, by his belief that the romantic moment – “the moment when the received culture was challenged... and the great humanist aspirations were abroad, but when sharp experience had shown that the periods of the philosophes were inadequate” (2) – can illumine and be illumined by our own.

James Chandler is also interested in the ways in which our moment and that of writers of the romantic period can be mutually informing. In the first instance, Chandler wants to establish that the recent turn to history in literary studies is in fact grounded in an earlier romantic historicism. While, given the very different feels of these two books and the fact that Chandler begins with a long excursion into theory, one might be tempted to set up Chandler as Thompson’s purveyor of university education versus Thompson as the proponent of the culture of experience, such a contrast would in fact be unfair to both men and perhaps particularly to Chandler who works hard to understand literary texts as informed now by theory, now by historical detail. The book’s organization makes explicit the tension between the attempt to offer theoretical totalizations and the drive to detail a historical moment, with the first part, “The ‘Historical Situation’ of Romanticism,” offering a theoretical exploration of what it means to understand romanticism in history and the second part, “Reading England in 1819,” offering particularized, contextualized readings of Scott, of Byron’s *Don Juan*, of Keats in 1819, of English writers who take up the question of culture in the United States, and, perhaps most powerfully, of Shelley.

Chandler offers an important exploration of what it means to identify a literary work with a particular moment, what it means simply to date a text. Chandler makes us aware of the differing registers within which we date texts: we could refer to Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” for example, as a nineteenth-century poem, a romantic poem, or a poem of 1819. When we usually date texts, we tend, I think, either to place them within very large period terms (the Renaissance, the Victorian age) or by the specific date of composition or publication (which is the way we usually see works cited in anthologies, for example); that is, we group works by very large cultural and historical categories

or by moments in the author's life as a writer. Neither dating seems satisfactory. Through an intricate analysis of the debate of the 1950s and 1960s between Sartre and Lévi-Strauss over the project of historicizing, Chandler seeks to understand how we can link works and days (to echo one of his chapter's echo of Herodotus) and how we can come to define a culture or a nation at a particular moment, as in the title given to Percy Shelley's poem by Mary Shelley that Chandler adopts for his book, "England in 1819."

As indicated above, Chandler wants first to insist that this debate reiterates a moment in romantic thought, that romantic poets paved the way for historicist scholars. Chandler argues that English writers – faced with the radical break that was the French Revolution, with the rise of a new nation and culture in the United States, and even with a neighboring competing culture in Enlightenment Scotland – came to understand culture as place and time specific. From noting the distinctions that arose due to "uneven development" between their culture and that of other contemporaneous societies, they learned to allow past cultures to speak to them in all their differentness; an ethnographic insight leads to a historical one. A Hazlitt or a Shelley only comes to speak of the "spirit" of his own age when he has come to recognize that each time and place has its own spirit. What Chandler seeks to do is to historicize historicism (33), to understand how our sense of history came first to consciousness during the romantic period. In making this point, Chandler stands against the move, most strongly identified with Jerome McGann and Marjorie Levinson, of using a historical method to reveal within the literature of the period a "romantic ideology," a tendency to embrace idealizing visions that do not so much resolve as occlude the real human problems they address. Or, rather, I think it is more precise to say that Chandler finds the "romantic ideology" to be held not by romantic poets but by romantic scholars, including in his view McGann, who are said to make the mistake of identifying romanticism's historical vision with a kind of Hegelianism that can then be debunked by a Marxist inflected critique. This turn to Hegel occupies in Chandler's account a similar role to the use of Godwin in Thompson's critique of scholars of the 1790s: in both cases, an abstract, idealizing theoretical position is seen to obscure the indigenous, living philosophy proved by the poets on the pulses of their lives and works. Where one version of historicism (but not necessarily McGann's in practice) has worked to disenchant our engagement with the works of the past in an attempt to free us in the present to create solutions for the future that do not merely repeat antiquated visions, Chandler's historicism – like Thompson's – finds in romanticism a deeply historicized vision that can still inform our current projects.

I should make it clear that Chandler, in rejecting what he sees as a flawed version of modern historicizing, does not turn against a Marxist-informed historicism. If he engages in detail Lévi-Strauss' critique of Sartre, it is finally to side with Sartre, and one of his main intellectual allies in this section of the book is Fredric Jameson. In a sense, what Chandler wants to do is to find within a

historicism grounded in romantic practice a way of revising and reviving Sartre's "progressive-regressive method," upon which Levinson has also drawn (as, in the interest of full disclosure I should admit, have I in my own small way). I can only outline Chandler's complex, recursive argument here.

Where in earlier periods historical events and individuals could be taken as examples from one historical period to be applied to another (one might model oneself on Brutus, for example), during the romantic period individuals and events come to be examples across or of the period (Napoleon as embodying the spirit of the age). Of course, Chandler does not believe that people, events, or more importantly here texts represent a period in some straightforward way. Chandler wants to understand how a particular moment shapes a text and how the text shapes the moment. Texts, in other words, address their moment not simply to reflect it but in order to change it. While Chandler considers various ways of figuring the text's relation to its moment – text both as mimesis (it represents or mirrors its moment) and as synecdoche (it represents the moment as a part of the whole) (147); the text as "portrait" and as "proxy," from Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak" (158); the text as "reflection" and "selection" of reality, from Kenneth Burke (171) – he finally seeks to reinvigorate the progressive-regressive method through his two key terms of analysis, case and casuistry.

The case "might be initially defined as the genre in which we represent situations" (39). Chandler is thinking of the case study and its new historical companionable form the anecdote but also of legal cases; the case is a particular instance, both specific and an instantiation of some larger structure or formation. However, Chandler (following André Jolles) points out that a case arises not only as an exemplification of a system – whether the legal system or the system behind the spirit of an age – but as an anomaly or gap in it: one has an interesting legal case, for example, only when the situation set forth in the case is not transparent with respect to the legal system. The case then is not simply an example, a reflection of totalized historical moment, but a process or action that shapes the moment. As a case offered under romantic historicism, any text – whether poem, play, novel, political tract, historical narrative, or philosophical discourse – that seeks to engage history serves both as an image of and a portion of its historical moment, and it works both to argue or describe the case of its moment and to decide – and thus change – that case. A case, then, offers a complex and contested form of representation.

Casuistry (which Chandler notes is a much discussed and altered term in the period) is "the discourse of the application of principle to circumstances" (39); that is, it is the progressive-regressive method created anew as a way of adjudicating a case, that is of deciding between the circumstances of the situation and the principles that are supposed to structure it, with the interesting twist being that the principles invoked in deciding the case might not only be those in place but also those of "a future state no longer conceived as a

transcendent or eschatological domain but rather as the projection forward in time of the conditions in which actually existing people are working out their destinies" (245). Simply put, when a judge decides a case, he or she does so with reference to the circumstances, to standing law, and to a sense of the ideal fulfillment of that law; casuistry enables the judge (or the artist or scholar) to move from details back to precedents and forward to a decision made to act as a precedent for the future. To put this in different terms, when we consider a poem, say Shelley's "England in 1819," as a case of England in 1819, we understand the poem as representative in that it is both re-representing the facts of the case – mirroring its moment – and adjudicating those facts so as to remake its moment. Understanding literature as case and analysis as casuistry enables us to place the text in context without reducing it to its context, as we move from the text back to the given context and forward to the new context the text wishes to make but which may only exist through the text.

Such matters get us about half way through this book which has been granted an amplitude unusual these days, another sign of the author's stature. The compass of reviews is, alas, more restricted, so I can really only note in passing the detailed readings offered in part two of *England in 1819*. The chapters in this section are linked together by Thomas Moore who is discovered as kind of representative living touchstone, someone connected with all the various figures and moments under discussion. One finds here a full argument for the centrality for romantic culture of Scott (and a somewhat different Scott from that of Lukacs), an excursion into McGann's home turf of Byron studies, a fine reading of Keats's "1819 temper" which offers a particularly strong analysis of the "Ode to Psyche" and which I wish I had absorbed before my own recent attempts to understand Keats, and a fascinating account of the response of English writers, including Keats, to the rise of the United States as another English-speaking power and culture. The book ends where it began, with Shelley, and if Scott's writings provide in some ways the backbone of the novel, it is Shelley which supplies its heart.

These various chapters offer demonstrations of the method set forth in the first half of the book and also, I think, serve to answer several possible counters to Chandler's argument. By beginning the section of specific readings with Scott, Chandler not only moves out from the lyric to the novel (and to arguably the most influential cultural figure of the period) but also demonstrates that one can discuss England in 1819 – in relation to Peterloo, Reform, and the potential for revolution – without turning only to writers on the left. The chapter on "Byron's Causes" explores causation in relation to cases and casuistry to show how the method can take up the difficult issue of determination and avoid remaining in synchronicity. The Keats chapter takes up one of the most contested cases in recent romantic scholarship, the question of the political or historicist Keats, to show how writers not as clearly engaged with history as, say, Scott and how the lyric as well as the novel can be understood through this

approach. "Concerning the Influence of America on the Mind" makes the important move of outlining a transatlantic romanticism (Chandler is more skeptical of including England within a European romanticism) and of thus locating romantic historicism not in a local but a comparative context. Throughout these chapters but particularly in the work on Shelley, Chandler also demonstrates that he need not give up the rigor of formal, close reading in turning to a historicized method. As in the recent and quite different work of Susan Wolfson, there is an effort to show that one can attend to historical and textual detail at the same time. Shelley also allows Chandler to show that the romantics themselves were struggling with the key Marxist formulation that human beings make their own history but not as they please. If we have had at different times a Wordsworthian or Blakean or Byronic romanticism, Chandler offers a Shelleyan one, where the author is not an isolated, self-defined and freely creating genius nor a mere mouthpiece for the spirit of the age but is instead an actor on a historical stage certainly not of his making but open to the impact of his makings, his poems.

It is here, finally, where I think Chandler and Thompson most importantly come together to discover in the interaction of romantic poetry and history both a sense for the importance of history to the understanding of our key cultural artifacts and a feel for the power of those artifacts and their artificers as they work to imagine and thus to help make the future. Together, they suggest that we adopt a historicism that is finally romantic in its engagement with the details of the present, its interest in the differences of cultures in different times and places, and its ability to posit a future made better by the work of the imagination.

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Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000).

Daniel Clayton's *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* is a big book. At 330 pages, it is not so much literally big as it is intellectually ambitious. Clayton provides a study of European-Aboriginal contact on Vancouver Island in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and uses that history to begin a much-needed rethinking of the loaded connections between place, power, politics and memory in British Columbia and, by implication, Canada and empire.

Clayton is a historical geographer concerned with physical, psychic and social space and how people live and think it. Yet *Islands of Truth* is a distinctly and literally literary work. For a book ostensibly about the visual realm of maps,