

Romantic Moods

Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790–1840

Thomas Pfau

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For Sandra

... a sé mi fece atteso
con l'armonia che temperi

... you drew me
with the harmony you temper

— DANTE, *Divine Comedy, Paradiso* 1.77–78

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List of Abbreviations

- AGS Theodor Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 20 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998)
- CPP William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Anchor Books, 1982)
- CrJ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951)
- EW Joseph von Eichendorff, *Werke*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1996)
- FCH Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories* (New York: Macmillan, 1963)
- FSA Sigmund Freud, *Studienausgabe*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1982)
- GCW William Godwin, *Things as They Are, or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, ed. Maurice Hindle (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1988)
- GPJ William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1798 version), ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1985)
- HB Heinrich Heine: *Briefe*, ed. Friedrich Hirth (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1950–51)
- HSS Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Klaus Briegleb (Munich: dtv, 1997)
- HSW *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998)
- KCP John Keats, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Longmans, 1970)
- LJK *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958)
- RM Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. Eric Foner (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1984)
- SK Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs (New York: Appleton Crofts, 1970)
- STT *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783*, compiled by T. B. Howell (London: T. C. Hansard for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown [etc.], 1816–28).
- WTB Novalis [Friedrich von Hardenberg], *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl, 3 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1978)

Romantic Moods

Introduction

This deep commotion
And turmoil in me, I would speak
Its name, find words for this emotion—
Through the whole world my soul and senses seek
The loftiest words for it: this flame
That burns in me, it must have a name!
And so I say: eternal, endless, endless—why,
You devil, do you call all that a lie?

— GOETHE, *Faust*, PART I, TRANS. DAVID LUKE

Every art form is defined by the metaphysical dissonance of life which it accepts and organizes as the basis of a totality complete in itself; the mood of the resulting world, and the atmosphere in which the persons and events thus created have their being, are determined by the danger which arises from this incompletely resolved dissonance and which therefore threatens the form.

— GEORG LUKÁCS, *Theory of the Novel*

Let me begin by providing a first rationale for the tripartite structure of this book, whose interconnected chapters on paranoia, trauma, and melancholy aim to map a psychohistorical narrative of European romanticism in three successive stages. The objective is—through patient consideration of the period's formal-aesthetic, epistemological, and discursive profile—to trace the evolution of romantic interiority, a concept “always-already” embedded in collective histories and often faltering or untrustworthy languages seeking to articulate the import of these histories. Seen against the backdrop of legal, political, feudal, and early capitalist structures pressured to the point of disintegration, first by the divisive impact of the French Revolution, next by seemingly interminable postrevolutionary warfare, and finally by a post-Napoleonic European Restoration that appeared to defy all progressive conceptions of historical time, romanticism's models of subjectivity exhibit a persistent dialectic between vaunted claims for spiritual renewal, political

justice, and cultural innovation, on the one hand, and a continual sense of affective and epistemological bewilderment, on the other. Responding to a persistent and emotionally charged sense that concepts of intentionality, causation, memory, rhetorical, moral, and aesthetic purity have become acutely unreliable, even void, English and German writers of the period thus shift toward experimentation with “virtual” (aesthetic) solutions to experiences often “felt” to be wholly intractable. If what Jacques Lacan calls “the Real” was being experienced, materially and affectively, as both volatile and inscrutable, romanticism’s quest for solutions in the mediated, imaginary sphere of aesthetic productivity also reflects the period’s conclusion that the languages by which the Augustans and the Enlightenment had sought to make uneven sense of their experiential worlds were no longer reliable or even trustworthy. For the most part, the romantics’ attempts to trace political, economic, and spiritual history back to its manifestation as emotional experience can only be unfolded in the chapters that follow. Yet before doing so, it is necessary to adumbrate a number of basic, interconnected propositions from which this study proceeds. In unfolding them at the beginning, I do not mean to deny that each remains eminently debatable and in need of much fine-tuning, most of which is to take place in the individual sections of this book. Still, some preliminary remarks on the key concept of mood are in order, specifically as that concept relates dialectically to aesthetic form, which in turn is viewed as part of broader, evolving patterns of discourse in which history becomes *prima facie* legible.

The status of emotions, long understood to have played a foundational role for the aesthetic and poetic theories of romantics like Kant, Schiller, Novalis, Hölderlin, Wordsworth, Coleridge, William Godwin, Mary Hays, and Joanna Baillie, among many others, has recently made a strong reappearance in literary theory. Following Cathy Caruth’s more specialized, though highly influential, study of how literary and psychoanalytic representation intersect in traumatic experiences, several recent studies, employing often diverse methodologies and reaching quite disparate conclusions, have explored the broad spectrum of emotions, feeling, affect, passion, and other Proustian “upheavals of thought.” Aside from Martha Nussbaum’s eponymous study, work by Adela Pinch, William Reddy, Philip Fisher, Paul Redding, Julie Ellison, and Rei Terada stands out. Notwithstanding their often dissimilar approaches, these projects all posit emotion as a kind of quasi-knowledge rather than as the (unreflexive) other of cognition. Instead of viewing emotion as psychological

miscellany or a mere dress rehearsal for the eventual, and supposedly more desirable, acuity of conceptual, analytic thought, the emotions are credited with establishing a holistic, tacitly evaluative relation to the world. Such a view, as Adela Pinch has argued, gained noticeable momentum around the middle of the eighteenth century, particularly in the work of Hume and Smith. With its frequent reference to “contagious” feelings and “correspondent movements in every human creature” (Hume, 576), Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* (1740) uncovered a paradoxical situation where “individuals . . . can rely on the authenticity of their own emotional responsiveness” even as “feelings are trans-subjective entities that pass between persons” and hence “are always really someone else’s.”¹

Without mentioning Hume by name, Jean-Luc Nancy likewise remarks on how “the unleashing of passions’ is not the free doing of a subjectivity” but, instead, “is of the order of what Bataille himself often designated as ‘contagion,’ another name for communication.” Yet what is communicated—a point of critical importance to Kant, as we shall see—is, according to Nancy “the *passion* of singularity as such. The singular being, because it is singular, is in the *passion* . . . of sharing its singularity. The presence of the other does not constitute a boundary that would limit the unleashing of ‘my’ passions: on the contrary, only exposition to the other unleashes my passions. Whereas the individual can know another individual, juxtaposed to him both as identical to him and as a thing . . . the singular being does not know, but rather experiences his *like* [*son semblable*] . . . This is the *passion*. Singularity is the *passion* of being” (Nancy, 32–33). “Community” thus involves the individual’s coming up against the feeling of his or her own “originary or ontological sociality” (*ibid.*, 28). While community can never be claimed as a definitive fact or product, it is “an infinite task at the heart of finitude” (*ibid.*, 35). It is the pathos or passion that unfolds in every address to another, every attempt at instantiating community as the communication between two finite, distinct, yet interimplicated individuals. As such, Nancy remarks, finitude “is nothing. It is neither a ground, nor an essence, nor a substance. But it appears, it presents itself, it exposes itself, and thus it *exists* as communication. . . . Finite being always presents itself ‘together,’ hence severally; for finitude always presents itself in being-in-common and as this being itself” (*ibid.*, 28). Revealing a very similar insight into the vicarious sociability of the individual’s passions Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) introduced “sympathy” as the master trope through which every discrete feeling and passion must be filtered so as to evaluate its

utility and propriety. As an obliquely juridical faculty charged with evaluating “the pitch [of a given passion] which the spectator can go along with,” sympathy operates primarily as a discursive, often narrowly lexical, principle; overcoming bodily cravings is “*properly called* temperance,” and a lover downplaying his private passions “with raillery and ridicule” has justly hit upon “the only style in which we are disposed to talk of [love]” (Adam Smith 1984, 27, 28, 32; emphasis added).

Despite its constant stress on the ductility of “sympathy” as a kind of metalingual regulatory agency for the passions, Adam Smith’s melioristic account in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* ultimately could not overcome what had so bewildered Hume; namely, that something as ostensibly private and inward as a feeling should be imbued with so much social energy. Mobilizing the concept of “sympathy” so as to achieve a kind of homeostasis between self and other ultimately led to the incessant labor of fortifying the language of benevolence against the specter of an Enlightenment subjectivity whose underlying emotive strata no longer bear any no stable and readily discernible relation to reason. John Mullan’s *Sentiment and Sociability* (1988) makes the representative point when approaching Richardson, Sterne, and Hume as “writers committed to the resources of a language of feeling for the purpose of representing necessary social bonds; all discover in their writings a sociability which is dependent upon the communication of passions and sentiments. . . . For all three, sociability depends upon the traffic not only of opinions, but of harmoniously organized feelings” (Mullan, 2, 7). For Mullan, it is no coincidence that the choreography of emotion should have primarily devolved upon “literature” in the emergent modern sense of “imaginative writing” and thus shifted away from the discipline of epistemology and its default genre, the treatise. For “philosophy cannot finally generalize a natural sociability when in doing so it removes itself from society—when it can find no embracing society of readers to address” (ibid., 13). The increasingly speculative turn of romantic philosophy, particularly in Germany, would appear to bear out Mullan’s hypothesis of a disciplinary dead end. Yet beginning with the Jena romantics, the apparent failure of pre-Kantian epistemology to articulate the essential social force of preconceptual emotive strata (variously and in partially overlapping ways identified as passion, sensibility, sentiment, or feeling) was dialectically reformulated as a unique and enabling point of departure for a sweeping aesthetic program. Prior to Kant’s transcendental conception of aesthetic “feeling” (*Gefühl*) and its subsequent, radical reappraisal by the Jena romantics, theo-

rizing about the emotions’ apparent lack of rational, discursive accountability used empirical expedients that are basically lexical. This Augustan strategy of containment, recently revived in Philip Fisher’s *The Vehement Passions*, is repeatedly resorted to in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and in his subsequent *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762–63). Thus feelings would be assigned “proper” lexical names that putatively signified their content and also classified these emotional phenomena (e.g., feelings, affections, passions, sentiments, anxiety, anger, mourning) depending on their perceived volatility or durability. In current philosophical parlance, emotions were being classified based on whether they were being experienced (in curiously unexamined, a priori fashion) as ephemeral “states” or settled “dispositions.”²

What in Hume had surfaced as a threat to the possibility of reason would by the time of Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) be indicted as Jacobinism’s “riotous farce” of political, socioeconomic, moral, and sexual enthusiasms, feelings so entirely self-authorizing and irresistibly communicative as to be widely embraced as “truth.” Samuel Johnson’s decision to exclude the “fugitive cant” of the rapidly expanding class of upwardly mobile professional and entrepreneurial Britons from his 1755 *Dictionary* already hinted that the fluctuating psychology and moral constitution of these new “middling” classes was being perceived as intimately entwined with shifts in the fabric of language. By the latter half of the century, psychological and, by extension, class-specific developments appeared *prima facie* legible *in* and *as* language. Hence, it seemed only logical that efforts to contain the middle class’s volatile sociopolitical energy should take the form of instituting a durable lexical nomenclature for those self-authorizing and self-interested passions that had propelled it into economic and cultural prominence. While already perceived as subtending all social relations and as determining (however obliquely) the ostensibly private, self-conscious individual’s mode of being, emotion came to be treated in a topical, lexical, and objectively indexical language. The kind of policing of semantic nuance in polite speech, poetry, and rhetorical theory as we see it unfold in writings by George Campbell, William Enfield, John Newbery, Adam Smith, or Hugh Blair appears an increasingly desperate attempt to remedy the inherent ambivalence and waywardness of emotions—a predicament that in Hume’s text already takes on the hue of an ineluctable, as it were, “transcendental,” condition. Fisher’s *The Vehement Passions* thus deals with “the occasioned, dramatic, experiential moments of the passions, not with . . . underlying dispositional or inclinational

facts." For Fisher, it is this conspicuousness and vehemence that identifies the passions as a "template for inner life" and as the "internal material of the self." Once routed through literature as their privileged, indeed their only, medium of reflection—offering "moments of experience, rather than summary, generalization, or long perspectives of time"—the passions as they emerge from Fisher's study also appear immune against all historical contingency. "Fear, anger, grief, and shame have been the states least shaped by the waves of culture and the passage of time." Seen as "among the least culturally constructed materials we have . . . their stability argues for a certain core of what Hume called, in the title of his book, human nature" (Fisher, 14–15, 21, 22–23).

However edifying, Fisher's attempt to recover "human nature" in the shape of timeless passions in the postmodern age seems rather unconcerned with the nervous, often fitful vigilance with which the Scottish rhetoricians and economic theorists of the later eighteenth century sought to police the passions by empirical, specifically rhetorical means. Hume's *Treatise* and Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* already acknowledge the social and historical determinacy of the passions, that "men in the different professions and states of life" will invariably be in the grip of "very different passions." In the face of emotion as differentiated according to socioeconomic criteria that are themselves in constant flux, any empirical theory of manners and conduct can ultimately only marshal the rhetoric of melioration and open-ended self-regulation. Hence, "as in all species of things, we are particularly pleased with the middle conformation" (Adam Smith 1984, 201). At the same time, Smith's recognition of passion as subject to socioeconomic—and that means, historically fluctuating—determinants actually holds a promising methodological implication. For it hints that history manifests itself as a fundamental psychological climate, which in turn has been encrypted in a distinctive *structure of discourse* rather than being openly divulged in local, contingent, and variously stylized expressive acts. As Julie Ellison puts it, "sensibility is a transaction, not a character type" (98). In finding its proper focus in the study of *langue* rather than *parole*, the conception of emotion as "mood"—and, in a mediate sense, the study of romanticism as a distinctive historical period—moves away from construing emotion as passion, that is, as a conspicuous type of expression whose degree of sincerity or performativity remains, in any event, unverifiable.³ In what follows, my aim is to distinguish and trace a distinctive "mood" as it subtends larger patterns of rhetorical behavior, both in imaginative and

discursive writing. Approaching emotion via the concept of "mood"—an approach that Chapter 1 seeks to justify on both historical and theoretical grounds—is a more rewarding (and also more cautious) strategy for identifying romanticism as a distinctive historical epoch with its own differentiated formal organization.

Once lifted out of the topical or lexical taxonomies by means of which Scottish Enlightenment philosophers and rhetoricians had so anxiously sought to contain it, emotion begins to reveal itself as a holistic and historically distinctive component in the unfolding story of modernity.⁴ When approached as a latent principle bestowing enigmatic coherence on all social and discursive practice at a given moment, "mood" opens up a new type of historical understanding: no longer referential, thematic, or accumulatively contextual. Rather, in its rhetorical and formal-aesthetic sedimentation, mood speaks—if only circumstantially—to the deep-structural situatedness of individuals within history as something never actually intelligible to them in fully coherent, timely, and definitive form. However "contemptible," it is "details" that "make part of a history . . . [and] the turn of most lives is hardly to be accounted for without them. They are continually entering with cumulative force into a mood until it gets the mass and momentum of a theory or a motive," George Eliot observed in 1876 (228). Arguably, a decisive methodological step toward such a conception of mood (to whose influential Heideggerian articulation we shall shortly turn) arises at the very threshold of romanticism in the form of Kant's transcendental reformulation of the problem of representation. In uncharacteristically succinct and colloquial terms, Kant's brief essay entitled "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" restates what his first *Critique* had unfolded in more rigorous, if enigmatic form as the "transcendental synthesis of apperception." The self-awareness of thought *as thought* rests on the logical premise of an inherently alien stratum of "feeling," Kant asserts. What is more, in finding its tenuous "ground" in some oblique affective substratum that is not (at least not *yet*) thought, conscious representation "feels" driven to slay its own shadowy progenitor. It aims to overcome an ontological and seemingly unshakeable feeling of disorientation that appears to linger as the very *causa materialis* and *causa finalis* of thought itself, an opacity in response to which thought springs into existence and from which it derives its mission. At first glance, though, Kant's epistemological sketch does not spotlight such Oedipal slings and arrows; in fact, his account appears at first quite orderly and comforting:

Properly speaking, to *orient* oneself means to use a given direction (our horizon being divided into four of them) in order to find the others—literally, to find the *sunrise*. When I perceive the sun in the sky and so know it to be midday, I am able to determine south, west, north, and east. Yet to do so I also need a *feeling of a difference* in my own subject, namely, the difference between my right and left hands. I call this a *feeling* because intuitively these two sides do not differ from one another. . . . Now I can extend this geographical concept of the procedure of orienting myself, and understand it by orienting myself in any given space in general, which is to say, by orienting oneself in strictly mathematical form. I may orient myself in a dark room familiar to me if I take hold of even one single object whose position I remember. Clearly, in this process I am aided by nothing except the faculty for determining position according to a *subjective* ground of differentiation: for I do not see any of the objects whose place I am to find; and if, as a practical joke, some other person were to have rearranged all the objects in that room, such that what was previously on the right now was on the left, I would be altogether at a loss to find anything in a room whose outer walls were otherwise wholly identical.⁵

This preternatural, strictly “subjective” “feeling” of difference per se—that is, the subject’s witnessing the operation of difference *prima facie* as an emotive value suddenly apparent, rather than as logical tool purposely sought out—constitutes for Kant the (fundamentally irrational) linchpin of all rational thought. Oddly enough, the transformation of a mere “feeling” of difference into a logical principle is possible only if the world that is to be “known” remains constant. Perhaps Kant’s image of good domestic order, of rooms whose furniture remains predictably inert, required no more than the good offices of a competent maid.⁶ More seriously, though, Kant’s example appears to gravitate toward the unpalatable choice between a wholly chaotic and a wholly predictable world, with either scenario bound to give rise to a profound feeling of disorientation. For chaos would lead to disorientation for a subject engulfed by differences that could never be conceptualized and directed toward definite purposes. The obverse scenario, particularly relevant to my exploration of melancholy in late romantic writing, would regard all purposes and objectives to be always already fixed in advance, such that a subject’s capacity for “feeling” difference would soon atrophy for sheer lack of application within a claustrophobic, overdetermined reality. Precisely because thought appears so eager to get on with its local, discursive business as “repre-

sentation” (*Vorstellung*), its emotive substratum—that enigmatic Kantian “feeling of difference”—never actually reaches or crosses the threshold of conscious awareness. The predicament of “feeling” as a structural mood subtending the business of representation is to be not only operative but also forgotten a priori. This implication of Kant’s transcendental notion of “mood” (*Stimmung*) is substantially extended by Heidegger, who remarks that—unlike this or that particular thing or feeling as it happens to be at hand—*Dasein* necessarily implies a capacity for obliviousness, for “not being there” (*Wegseinkönnen* [1983, 95 / English: 1995, 61]).

At the same time, Heidegger views Kant’s transcendental method as offering an insufficient account of what he calls *Dasein*, that is, the ontological nexus of purposes and identifications (*Zeugzusammenhang*) already in play for all quotidian practice and theoretical reflection.⁷ Thus in the above passage from Kant, the “feeling” of a difference turned out to be already premised on “remembering” a particular piece of furniture as the Archimedian point of reference. Kant thus does not fully acknowledge the way in which his own transcendental method presupposes “world” as something already “given,” an anterior and holistic “disposition” (*Befindlichkeit*) of which the Kantian “feeling of difference” is only a specific manifestation. World, for Heidegger, constitutes that into which transcendental apperception itself has always already been “thrust.” What Heidegger means by such “having-been-thrust” (*Geworfenheit dieses Seienden in sein Da* [1979, 135]) thus amounts to a dispositional relation to the world logically prior to any sustained cognitive engagement or incidental affective experience.

Building on Kant’s transcendental reflection, in which “feeling” is explicitly contrasted with occasional and empirically locatable sensations, sentiments, or passions (*Empfindung, Leidenschaft*), Heidegger’s conception of “mood” (which I shall retain over McNeill and Walker’s recent translation of *Stimmung* as “attunement”) thus names “not a particular being [but] . . . a fundamental manner, the *fundamental way in which Dasein is as Dasein*.” It is “that which gives *Dasein subsistence and possibility* in its very foundations.” While occasional emotions or sentiments will by their very nature expire, their eventual absence, Heidegger cautions, must not be construed to mean that during such intervals we are ever “out of attunement.” Hence, “*Dasein as Dasein* is always already attuned in its very grounds. There is only ever a change of attunement,” and provisionally speaking “moods are the ‘presupposition’ for, and ‘medium’ of thinking and acting” (1995, 67–68). It is readily apparent, then, that “mood”

in Heidegger operates at an level analogical to (though not identical with) Kant's "transcendental conditions of possibility." It is the horizon wherein all conscious practice—including the whole spectrum from hyperrational pursuits to vehement passions—is being transacted, a horizon that therefore can never come into view as such. As the presupposition for maintaining *any* cognitive or, for that matter, emotive relationship to the world whatsoever, "mood" is ontologically anterior to the realm of what may be logically verified and discursively represented as knowledge. It is in the nature of "mood" not to be reflexively aware but, as the substratum of conscious awareness and representation, to resist discernment, particularly where attempts are made to positively, consciously fix it in representational form. Form, then, functions like the symptom in post-Freudian psychoanalysis by simultaneously indexing and concealing a pervasive disequilibrium that simultaneously organizes and vexes historical communities. As Lukács puts it, "the creation of forms is the most profound confirmation of the existence of a dissonance."⁸

It is this inaccessibility of Heidegger's "mood" to conventional forms of demonstration that accounts for why philosophical inquiry must submit to a fundamental methodological reorientation. Heidegger responds to that exigency with the figural language of "awakening" (*Wecken*) a "mood" rather than positively knowing it. "What," he asks, "does it mean to awaken a mood," and "how are we to relate toward man himself if we wish to awaken a mood" (1995, 63; trans. modified)?

Moods [*Stimmung*] are something that cannot be straightforwardly ascertained in a universally valid way, like a fact that we could lead everyone to see. Not only can mood not be ascertained, it ought not to be ascertained, even if it were possible to do so. For all ascertaining means bringing to consciousness. With respect to mood, all making conscious means destroying, altering in each case, whereas in awakening a mood we are concerned to let this mood be as it is, as this mood. Awakening means letting a mood be, one that, prior to this, has evidently been sleeping, if we may employ this image.⁹

Heidegger's Blakean metaphoric play on sleep and rousing, his delicate balancing act of awakening *Dasein* to its own ontological situatedness without fixing the latter in outright positivistic terms is crucial for several reasons. First and foremost, Heidegger's shift toward an overtly metaphoric register hints that, methodologically speaking, the desired awakening can only ever be realized in the figural, virtual domain of the aesthetic. Secondly, Heidegger's

account effectively claims that, far from being the deficient other of conscious awareness, sleep constitutes an integral part of *Dasein*. For the trope of sleep also tells us how *Dasein* has always already been thrust into a historical moment and consequently can never arrive at a positive and verifiable representation of its disposition (*Befindlichkeit*); or, as Alfonso Lingis summarizes the case: "All mood is bewilderment" (152). In its very mode of historical being, *Dasein* thus continually enacts the essential obliquity of the Kantian sublime. Finally, any awakening of *Dasein* to its latent disposition as such requires that we understand mood not as an occasional or even transcendental feeling but, rather, as the horizon encompassing both, the "being-there" and apparent "not-being-there" of quotidian no less than philosophical consciousness. "It is fundamentally misleading," Heidegger notes, "to say that a mood is there, for in such a case we take mood as something like one existing property that appears amongst others" (1995, 65 / 1983, 97–98; translation modified).

As a methodological challenge, Heidegger's "awakening" will be of concern throughout this study. At the same time, I argue that romanticism itself confronted the task of awakening to its own historicity during the massive upheavals brought about by Napoleon's drastic transformation of Europe's political, legal, and economic landscape between 1800 and 1815. As my middle chapters argue, it is a central purpose of romantic lyricism to facilitate the transition of romantic communities to the drastically altered world into which they had so abruptly been thrust as a result of these changes. With its simultaneous searching, if cryptic, tropes, lyric form in particular aims to awaken romantic subjectivity *from* its dormant state and *to* its perilous historical situatedness, all the while sheltering (at least partially) the subject of such awakening from the traumatic impact of the knowledge so produced in the cocoon of aesthetic form.

What more recent studies, in particular Rei Terada's lucid account in *Feeling in Theory* and also, if less consistently, Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought* share with Heidegger's analysis of "mood" as a deep-structural "disposition" (*Befindlichkeit*) is the view that, by virtue of its nonintentional character, mood opens up a deeper understanding of *Dasein* as irreducibly historical. If, as even Philip Fisher's very differently oriented study notes, the eighteenth century saw a gradual "shift from a vocabulary of passions to one of feelings, emotions, or moods" (Fisher, 6), I hope to show that this transformation comes into its own in the theoretical and literary writings of European romanticism. Hence, throughout this study, my use of "emotion" departs from

the Kantian notion of “feeling” (*Gefühl*) as it is explored in Chapter 1. In addition, my discussion there also traces how, because of what Kant had shown to be the essentially nonpropositional status of feeling—itsself the condition of representation (*Vorstellung*) “in general”—his successors, particularly Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Novalis (the nom de plume of Friedrich von Hardenberg [1772–1801]), and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), progressively conceived “mood” as an aesthetic phenomenon, something that can be laid bare only in the modality of virtual, figural constructions. In departing from Heidegger’s conception of “mood” (*Stimmung* or *Grundstimmung*), my focus on a dispositional rather than situational understanding of “emotion” in no way means to deny that romanticism, like earlier elective or repressive regimes, also and regularly sought to curtail the more vehement passions. Other more empirical kinds of inquiry, such as exploring “how and when it became productive to know feelings as difficult and wayward” (Pinch, 15), remain without doubt just as valuable and necessary. Yet inasmuch as the latter type of investigation posits feeling as holding discrete empirical contents that it deems susceptible of objective reconstruction, it is not the kind of inquiry that this study means to undertake. Rather, I hope to explore the broader implications for European romanticism of the conception of feeling first articulated in Kant’s transcendental writings. Instead of bemoaning, expressing alarm at, or hoping to remedy the emotions’ alleged lack of conceptual distinctness and clarity (to recall Leibniz’s criteria), post-Kantian philosophical and, above all, literary writing approaches feeling as mood, and hence as operating at a level logically anterior to the business of discrete reference, object-representation, and analytic, discrete knowledge.

Building on, though also departing from, Martha Nussbaum’s recent study of the emotions, Chapter 1 argues that in feeling or emotion, (terms that both Nussbaum and the romantics tend to use interchangeably) individuals and, ultimately, communities establish a sustained, quasi-intentional and tacitly evaluative relation to their experiential world. Far from constituting psychological miscellany, mood establishes a quasi-cognitive relation to the world in the specific modality of *emotion*, that is, as an intrinsically evaluative experience. This does not disengage emotive experience from analytic behavior, especially since, as Kant was the first to argue, it is precisely in feeling that the underpinnings of “cognition in general” and its subsequent objectification and circulation as propositional language are to be found. The aesthetic overall, and literature and poetry more particularly, reconstitute the at once emotive and

evaluative foundation of the Kantian subject inasmuch as they are *not* geared toward discrete, analytical object-knowledge but instead draw attention to a holistic and evaluative a priori “mood” on which discrete intellectual acts and articulations inadvertently rest. The “voice” (*Stimme*) of such an ontological mood (*Stimmung*) takes the temperature of conscious historical existence; Heidegger calls it the “mood of thought.” In qualifying emotion as “quasi-intentional” and “quasi-cognitive,” I also imply that a comprehensively determined, holistic disposition vis-à-vis the world such as transpires *in* and *as* emotion will not be transparent to individuals or communities; it cannot be experienced in the same ways as ordinary propositional object knowledge. Approaching the matter from a slightly different angle, Julie Ellison also notes how “sensibility and a host of other conditions were *always* sophisticated, reflective, and complex.” As “the *admitted* connection between speculation, mood, and power . . . sensibility is consciously bound up with the social management of sympathetic knowledge” (Ellison, 6–7). To be sure, a condition does not attain reflective awareness *as such*; or, as Novalis, perhaps romanticism’s most analytical thinker on the subject of emotion, puts it so succinctly: “feeling cannot feel itself.” Yet such an observation does not so much indict “feeling” as a condition of blindness as ascribe to it a holistic function that cannot be fulfilled—indeed, would be forestalled by—self-awareness. In other words, behind Novalis’s gnomic statement there lurks the important insight that emotions are not “owned” by the solitary individual. Rather, in curious ways, they prove antecedent to and foundational for the constitution and self-awareness of the individual subject. The emotions’ apparent lack of reflexivity thus does not so much constitute a shortcoming as point to their categorically different phenomenological status and, consequently, to a different role of emotions in the overall architecture of human affairs. Emotions in the foundational and abiding sense in which this entire study aims to explore them are not experienced “as such” but constitute a latent evaluative grid for all possible experience, as well as for all discursive and expressive behavior.

As Novalis and most of the romantics in Germany and England clearly understood, the project of bringing emotions into focus for a belated, “critical” intelligence requires that we trace them in the formal and structural operations of romantic writing. That such a method of reading should oddly resemble the conspiratorial, even paranoid, mode of social understanding on which the first two chapters of this book are focused amounts to a hermeneutic circularity, which I hope to address at various junctures of the book. For the time being,

suffice it to say that romantic studies—both as developed in this book and in earlier, perhaps more orthodox, deconstructionist, materialist, and historicist forms over the past three decades—cannot contain its object of study within some autonomous methodological program. Rather, its aim ought to be to elucidate the contiguity of contemporary critical and theoretical models with European romanticism. Hence, if anything like a theory of romanticism is to emerge from what follows, it will be so in the double sense in which romanticism can become an object of knowledge only if, at every turn of the analysis, the intellectual and aesthetic heritage of the romantic era is recognized as both the driving motivation and the abiding conceptual framework shaping the critical results. As Hans-Georg Gadamer put it long ago, the challenge of understanding lies not in evading the hermeneutic circle but in determining how properly to enter into it.

It should thus come as no surprise that the first articulations of the ontological role of feeling can already be found in the theoretical writings of the early romantic era, in particular in texts of Rousseau, Godwin, Wordsworth, Kant, Novalis, and Hölderlin. Kant above all was the first, perhaps the only, writer to succeed in articulating a socially and aesthetically purposive role for the “specious good” (in Lionel Trilling’s apt phrase) of “pleasure.” I explore in some detail here what allows feeling to hold such a pivotal role in the aesthetic theories of Kant and early romantics such as Novalis, Hölderlin, and Wordsworth. For feeling, less in spite than because of its imperviousness to conceptual thinking is intrinsically oriented toward social life and communal values and purposes. Indeed, its holistic cognition mandates an equally holistic mode of articulation—“literature”—that presents these purposes in condensed or encrypted, rather than propositional, form. Kant locates the archetypal form of this feeling of pleasure in a simultaneously formal and evaluative act called “aesthetic-reflective judgment.” To the extent that it acquires phenomenal distinctness as a feeling “voiced” for others, Kant’s aesthetic judgment instantiates an imagined community. In the language of the *Critique of Judgment*, it “imputes assent” to the other. In extension of Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which explores “sympathy” as the master trope for the implicit connectivity of all subjective behavior, Kant’s feeling of pleasure *qua* (aesthetic) judgment demarcates the individual’s holistic and evaluative awareness of its socially embedded existence; hence Kant’s claim that the “feeling of pleasure” at once instantiates and performatively reinforces a *sensus communis*. What motivates a voice to introduce a value, in the expressive

modality of a judgment of taste, into public, discursive circulation is the premise of the fundamental connectedness of all individuals. It is a premise intrinsic to feeling itself, though also one to be continually reaffirmed with each new judgment of taste.

For Novalis and Hölderlin, the originally Kantian projection of feeling, not simply *into* the public arena but *prima facie* as that virtual, imaginary public sphere itself, mandates a new, radically constructivist aesthetic. Literature no longer functions as the incidental embodiment of normative moral or contingent and fleeting affective states. Rather, romanticism conceives of literature as a unique heuristic medium that allows individuals to objectify their “felt” connectedness by reconstituting and objectively preserving such holistic experience in the virtual reality of imaginative writing. Seen in this protomodernist perspective, the radical aesthetics of early romanticism also realize a quasi-evolutionist objective of self-prolongation, a core motive equally intrinsic to “feeling” and to civilization *tout court*. Faust’s ardent plea at the moment of absorbed contemplation of his beloved’s image—“Linger yet! Thou art so beautiful!” (Verweile doch! Du bist so schön)—echoes Rousseau’s capturing of pleasure in autobiographical writing, one where the medium of the text reconstitutes pleasure to the extent that it succeeds in suspending the flow of empirical time. Rousseau’s fifth *Reverie* meanwhile resonates in Kant’s remarks about how we “linger” over the feeling of the beautiful and “seek to prolong it.” Thus the mythically significant blips on the radar screen of the individual psyche—that is, a holistic and overdetermined social knowledge encrypted as a “feeling”—seek to acquire *durée* in the malleable and objective medium of aesthetic construction. The literary work forgets its “work character” (as labor and objective otherness) to the extent that it successfully reconstitutes pleasure in a formal simulacrum whose aesthetic experience is, in turn, to mirror and thus prolong that very pleasure.

As the readings of Kant and Novalis in Chapter 1 argue, early romanticism conceives of emotion as kind of intelligential longing. Indeed, for the writers in question, emotion constitutes the archetypal experience of intelligence *as* longing for an ultimately elusive closure. This conception of emotion as a searching for its own cause remains valid for the entire study and, I would argue, remains theoretically relevant to this day. Following through on the romantics’ intuition that emotive complexions are best explored in virtual, imaginary constructions (poems, novels, etc.), this study traces its key romantic moods—paranoia, trauma, and melancholy—through their speculative

embodiment *in* and *as* literary form. It is this malleable objectivity of literary form, freed from the pragmatism of quotidian thought (what Schleiermacher called “das geschäftliche Denken”), that allows its subjects—authors and readers alike—to close in on an understanding of what Heidegger was to analyze as the structure of *Dasein* (“being-in-the-world”). Philosophy has always found itself most forcefully drawn to the literary when struggling to justify its hypothesis of a “negative” universal, a motoric, precognitive, and hence inscrutable agency said to circumscribe all possible historical and material experience, whether thought of as a Kantian *Ding an sich*, Schopenhauer’s *Wille*, Freud’s unconscious, or Heidegger’s *Dasein*. Beyond introducing and legitimating the romantic master tropes as a theoretical exigency, however, philosophy after Kant still had to account for them in phenomenological terms. In each case, the need to connect a transcendental or ontological postulate to a welter of empirical experience (now held to be untrustworthy because premised on ineluctable conditions) prompts the writers to introduce a concept closely related to what the present study designates as emotion. Thus Kant speaks of *Gefühl* and Heidegger of *Stimmung*, while Freud routinely focuses on an “affective charge” that, although not transparent to the speaking subject, ties the latter’s representations in symptomatic form to what Freud’s metapsychological writings (1911–15) designate as the universal “system Unconscious.” In each case, the emotion’s persistent, albeit prediscursive gravitational pull—its characteristically “symptomatic” mode of appearance—draws attention to the myriad ways in which individuals and communities are always embedded in antagonistic ideological and discursive networks that they can neither transcend nor comprehend in systematic form.

Throughout this study I argue that romantic literature is impelled by an agenda remarkably similar to that of the thinkers just named. Yet if romantic literature broaches fundamental ontological questions, it does so not in discursive or propositional form but, rather, in formal-aesthetic constructs whose very design aims to mediate an abiding “mood” or *Stimmung*. The role of the aesthetic thus becomes to trace how individuals and communities are at once embedded in and estranged from their experiential, historical reality. With its focus on “anxiety” (*Angst*) as the quintessential “mood” of *Dasein*, Heidegger’s *Being and Time* largely recaptures what romanticism had already come upon in its own figural mode: namely, that the prevailing “mood” of anxiety constitutes the ontological echo of man as a strictly *historical* phenomenon, a “being-in-the-world” that knows of its utter lack of any transcendent point of

reference or “ground.” For that reason, whatever its generic filiations and thematic surface concerns, romantic literature’s true *sujet* can never be reduced either to a mere aggregate of discrete historical information or a sum total of antagonistic aims, purposes, hopes, fears, or longings. Rather, it explores how experience in the aggregate molds the emotional fabric of its subject—namely, as a persistent and unsettling “feeling” of the irreducible tenuousness and volatility of being, a quality to be mirrored in lyric and narrative forms whose interpretive complexity proves just as palpable and irreducible.

From what has been said thus far, it follows that the concept most commonly associated with romanticism and with emotions, “expression,” will not have a central role in this inquiry. While “expression” has certainly proven itself “the dominant trope of thought about emotion” (Terada, 11), the moods here proposed as a paradigmatic, loosely chronological sequence for British and German romanticism—paranoia (1789–1800), trauma (1800–1815), and melancholy (1815–1840)—yield little if approached through the expressive hypothesis. The reasons for that dilemma (if it is one) will be considered shortly; suffice it to say for the moment that in the cases of paranoia and melancholy, the mood in question, however essential to the constitution of its subjects, can only be inferred and traced through its vivid rhetorical effects. Neither state can be secured through its supposed expressive manifestations, for both the paranoid and the melancholy subject themselves appear to be consumed by the acquisition, manipulation, and citation-like display of expressive techniques and conventions. The exception, trauma, refuses assimilation to the expressive hypothesis for more or less obverse reasons; thus one of its constitutive features involves a nearly complete lack of affect, and whatever emotional charge may be seething beneath the faltering, quasi-catatonic locutions of its subject puzzles the reader-observer with its seeming lack of intensity and content. Yet even here inwardness seizes upon socially sanctioned models of expressive behavior, such as ballads and folk songs said to have been serendipitously reclaimed from the brink of extinction from memory. Their expressive pathos—now stylized as a literature offering itself as the ideal medium and repository for a nation’s collective identity—is once again shaped by the very specter against which it defends romantic reading audiences in Britain and Germany alike: the traumatic shock of economic, political, and cultural modernity itself.

The first chapter establishes a theoretical framework for what might easily be objected to as an anachronistic Heideggerian and Freudian conceptual

armature. In revisiting seminal texts by Kant, Novalis, and Hegel—punctuated by brief forays into Rousseau, Fichte, Wordsworth, and Hölderlin—I aim to trace the concept of “mood” (*Stimmung*) back to a contiguous nomenclature as it prevails in early romanticism and German idealism. The term “mood” is itself already in play, especially in Kant, yet it is framed by a number of related concepts—some decidedly bequests of Enlightenment thought (“feeling,” “pleasure,” and “sentiment”), others presaging nineteenth-century advances in psychology and evolutionary theory (“intuition,” “drive,” and “instinct”). Whichever of these terms happens to be developed by one of the above writers, it tends to be invested with a transcendental function. The purpose of organizing this opening, theoretical exploration of “mood” in romantic writing as a sequence of readings in Kant, Novalis, and Hegel, is to isolate and work through three theoretical problems within this key concept itself as they came to be addressed after 1790. First, there is the Kantian problem of how the dual structure of “pleasure” (in the beautiful and the sublime respectively) reflects back on his late-Enlightenment conception of rationality. “Feeling” (*Gefühl*) in Kant, not only guarantees the mutual “attunement” of the faculties and so facilitates “cognition in general”; it also attests to the subject’s fundamental disposition to a constructive engagement with the world as a nexus of social and moral relations that needs to be continually fashioned anew. Next, in his brilliant critique of Fichte’s early *Science of Knowledge*, Novalis demonstrates that any distinction between a primal “feeling” and a self-conscious agency to be deduced from it is theoretically indefensible and indemonstrable. Given the dramatic collapse of any systematic and rational nexus between “feeling” and self-awareness, Novalis is among the first to argue that the prereflexive identity of “feeling” or “mood” (*Gefühl, Stimmung*) demands, not objective and systematic “grounding,” but aesthetic mediation. What is called for is not philosophy but art, not a logician’s *ultima ratio* but a skillfully and ironically wrought supplemental order of symbols, themselves arranged as highly complex and continually evolving structures (e.g., Hölderlin’s triadic hymns or the developmental novel [*Bildungsroman*]). This transmutation of an epistemological impasse into the very premise of aesthetic production finally brings us to the last question, one crystallized in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and obviously still pressing today. What is the aim of a critical engagement with art? Is the discernment of some complex (though historically quite specific) “mood” encrypted in artworks to result in a conceptual gain? Does Hegel’s historical-systematic discussion of the “lyric,” which will be our focal point, seek to contain and sublimate

the complex “mood” that had given rise to that particular genre? Or does the project of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* recognize its own narrative and systematic argumentation to be dialectically conditioned, that is, to have become possible only through its engagement with the nonsystematic “mood” of the literary?

Chapters 2 and 3 take up the first of the three paradigms, paranoia, as the mood underlying and formally organizing political and literary writing in Britain during the 1790s. To employ the technical, even clinical, term “paranoia” again would appear to risk imposing an alien conceptual structure on the textual phenomena in question. The potential risks of such an approach are mitigated, however, by the fact that both for Freud and for the romantics, mood is fundamentally something dynamic, a process whose symptomatic character involves the dialectical, functional interaction of pathological and remedial features. Both Freud and the romantics, to whom, as he never tired stressing, he was greatly indebted, thus conceive of emotion as an intelligential operation obsessively concerned with ascertaining its own cause. To that end, emotion continually strives to embody itself in objective forms whose role is at once expressive and heuristic, burdensome and (potentially) recuperative. As I argue in Chapter 3, Freud’s attempt at establishing a universally valid model for the “mechanism of paranoia” ultimately succumbs to the same predicament as bedeviled the crown’s attorney general during his ill-fated 1794 attempt at securing convictions of members of the London Corresponding Society charged with the “imaginary” or “unconsummated” crime of high treason. Both for Freud and Attorney General John Scott, the analytical master narrative that aims to expose and so resolve conspiratorial anxiety effectively instantiates the very conspiracy against which it professes to defend the constitution by imputing it as a malicious intent to the defendants. Paranoia thus emerges as a constitutive feature of political, legal, sociological, and eventually psychoanalytic narrative: the form of narration and of analytic discovery is perilously cued by the logic of the symptom against which such a narrative seeks to defend its producers. In the end, the legal narrative of the crown, like that yielded by Freud’s 1911 reading of Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber’s autobiographical account of paranoia, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1903), formally mirrors and reinforces the disorderly emotion against which it had been conceived as a defense mechanism.

The treason trials of 1794 highlight in particularly succinct form a pattern of retroactive, anxious cognition that can also be observed in a number of prominent texts of the early 1790s. Chapter 2 briefly explores some of those,

such as Burke's *Reflections*, Paine's *Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft's 1792 *Vindication*, Blake's early prophecies, and Kant's first *Critique*. The objective in these short forays is strictly limited to highlighting a shared argumentative structure that points back to an underlying, all-encompassing anxiety of the modern. The chapter then proceeds to a more thorough analysis of paranoid emotion as it crystallizes into a radical concept of retroactivity in Godwin's *Political Justice*. The result of that book's rigorous inquiry into the structure of consciousness and its elusive, indeed chaotic, a priori sources (impulses, emotions, anxieties, cryptic memories, etc.) renders anarchy less a political objective than the epistemological default. *Political Justice* thus confronts Godwin with an entropic psychosocial world from which the concept of causation has materially disappeared except as an all-consuming, retroactive fantasy about the hidden coherence of acts and outcomes. In response, Godwin's *Things as They Are, or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) turns to the imaginary world of romance so as to explore political and communal relations whose subterranean operational logic, like the Kantian noumenon, seems tantalizingly inaccessible. Kant's "transcendental apperception" and Godwin's eponymous protagonist in *Caleb Williams* dramatize how early romantic history (1789–98) is experienced as an unrelenting condition of anxious hyperlucidity or paranoia. As encountered in theoretical and fictional narratives of the 1790s, social and political knowledge proves inextricably entwined with its emotional phenomenology—namely, as a feeling of lucid, all-encompassing vigilance or "agitation" (a key concept for Blake, as Steven Goldsmith has shown) whose axiomatic, nonfalsifiable principle could be formulated thus: *the experience of the real hinges on one's constant preparedness to distrust the reality of experience and to expose the latter as so many ideological frames conspiring against our genuine access to the real.*

The middle chapters (4 and 5) of this book, focused on trauma, explore what happens when those symbolic frames for defending against a subterranean and incipient catastrophic change (a.k.a. the sublime) are about to disintegrate. Beginning with the Napoleonic era, one of unremitting warfare and unprecedented political, legal, and cultural change compressed into twenty-two tumultuous years (1793–1815), the dilemma of early romanticism seems almost reversed. The challenge suddenly becomes, not how to change a recalcitrant ancien régime, but how to assimilate rapid and pervasive changes that confound the explanatory reach of available political, economic, and cultural languages. With Wordsworth and the German romantic Joseph von

Eichendorff serving as the principal and representative figures, the emotive and historical scenario of romanticism seems utterly changed from that of the 1790s. Characteristic of trauma is the nearly total absence of any affective or emotive disturbance, an interpretive conundrum that requires particularly attentive reading of catastrophic meanings typically lurking beneath the stoic, marked impersonality of balladic and pastoral writing. Not surprisingly, the era in question witnesses the temporary displacement of drama by the cryptic depth of lyric poetry. Chapters 4 and 5 explore how the seemingly stoic "composure" and "tranquility" of lyric or pastoral writing reveals itself as a phantasmagoria painstakingly elaborated so as to shelter its speakers from the impinging knowledge of their complicity in a historical world so entropic and volatile as to preclude its timely comprehension. In its very concision, made apparent by its fixation on seemingly autonomous images (e.g., the sheepfold in "Michael"), lyric writing of the period between 1800 and 1815 presents itself as the generic and rhetorical outgrowth of a traumatic, which is to say, comprehensive and overwhelming, disturbance of the subject. As I argue, at the heart of that disturbance lies the recognition that no one, however peripheral to the economic and geopolitical upheavals of the Napoleonic and early capitalist era, can escape being implicated in this inchoate and threatening welter of modernity.

As Proust, Freud, and Benjamin have pointed out, the epistemological form corresponding to trauma is that of an involuntary, yet also inescapable, sudden memory. Hence, just as the paranoid narratives examined in Chapters 2 and 3 appear equivocally poised between the symptomatically defensive and the inadvertently lucid, high romantic lyricism also precipitates its subject's awakening to the very modernity against which the lyric form itself was meant to furnish symbolic shelter. To clinch these larger implications, the second chapter in each of this book's three parts aims to expand our focus beyond the basic configuration between emotion, genre, and history to include the broader ideological effects that are an inadvertent result of lyric writing and reading. Here in particular it emerges how thinking about emotion in transindividual and structural-discursive (rather than thematic, topical) ways "is one of the best arguments that we have for cultural memory" (Fisher, 7). In the case of Joseph von Eichendorff, such effects include a significant advance in the conception of romantic allegory and, on the level of political discourse, the emergence of a new language (romantic conservatism) that turns out to presage postmodern theories of fantasy. Suffice it to say for now that romantic *Altkonservatismus*—

a fusion of classical Stoicism and post-Enlightenment theory—not only differs sharply from the politics of post-1819 *Reaktion* with which it is often confused; it also stands far apart from what conservatism denotes today, especially in the United States: rapacious economic practices pursued on a *global* scale by any means necessary, in callous indifference to human dignity and a sustainable environment alike, and sold, with scant rhetorical effort (usually *ex post facto*) as “our national interest” to a politically illiterate and apathetic electorate.

If the traumatic period 1798–1815 unfolds as the progressive awakening of romantic subjects and communities to a world whose economic, legal, and spiritual bearings had been decisively altered, indeed rendered almost unrecognizably alien and disconcerting, the period following the defeat of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna presents a nearly obverse scenario. In approaching post-Napoleonic culture and writing in England and Germany under the umbrella concept of melancholy, however, I do not aim to align myself with already well-established historicist efforts at reconstructing the covert though insistent political thrust of the writings of Keats, Shelley, the Leigh Hunt circle, Cobbett, and other radicals, something exhaustively documented by Jeffrey Cox, James Chandler, Nicholas Roe, William Keach, Leonora Nattress, and Ian McCalmain, among others. Rather than scanning romantic “literary” writing for political meanings that historicism is prepared to acknowledge only in propositional, “nonliterary” form, my concluding chapters locate the historical significance of late romantic lyric writing precisely in its vexed relation to the public value (or fetish) of “literariness.” Unfolding in each case as a minority literature with startlingly modernist overtones of social, ethnic, and spiritual abjection, the writings of Keats and Heine throw into relief the perceived exhaustion of “literature” in its by then well established self-presentation as visionary, transcendent, and permanent.

As I first argue in my reading of Keats’s early style, melancholy is not so much a thematic preoccupation in literature as homologous with the notion of literariness itself. So as to revive literature’s intrinsic potential and salvage it from its impending fate as canonical heritage or tradition, both Keats and Heine strategically amalgamate literary genres and their basic rhetorical figures with overtly nonliterary and supposedly “impure” techniques of writing and speech. This takes the form of blurring the boundaries between lyric description and sentiment with the serial monotony of journalistic writing, or of importing dialect features and references—derived from Cockney and

German-Jewish culture, respectively—into the “literary work” so as to unmask its claims to autonomy and exemplarity as a class-specific fraud.

Beyond its ostensibly satiric effect, such a hybridization of literature also reveals a deeper and intrinsically melancholic insight, one already located by Renaissance humanism in the troubling enjambment of spirit and matter in print culture and book learning. Namely, melancholy bespeaks the deep-structural fatigue of a culture that has grown oppressively familiar with itself and hence begins to despair over the apparent inefficacy of its generic and rhetorical means. Born of an excess of knowledge and, it would seem, terminally mired in the lucid inertia of the saturnine individual, the late romantic writings of Keats and Heine thus reconstitute in objective, textual form the correspondingly abject mood of their historical audiences. In suspending high romantic sentiment, feeling, or emotion between genuine experience and mere literary citation, their writings not only raise fundamental questions about the expressive limits of canonical literary writing but, simultaneously, expose the atrophied inwardness of reading audiences who continued to subscribe unconditionally to the very concept of literariness as a “pure” and timeless value. This stylistic insurrection of literature against the formal characteristics and narrow ideological purposes of “literariness” also accounts for the uncommonly divisive reception with which Keats’s and Heine’s poetry met. As my opening discussion of Heine’s early lyric oeuvre, his *Buch der Lieder* of 1827, seeks to establish via Nietzsche and Freud, a reading of late romantic lyricism must remain especially attentive to the persistent affiliation of melancholy and resentment. Such a correlation is borne out by the particularly volatile history of Keats’s and Heine’s receptions with their continuing (indeed, in Heine’s case steadily intensifying) outbursts of class-based and anti-Semitic prejudice, respectively.

As I develop it in the closing chapters of this book, romantic melancholy is distinguished from the earlier paradigms of emotion (paranoia, trauma) by its apparent proximity to what Hegel calls self-consciousness. Because romantic melancholy seems an emotion born of a comprehensive awareness of its historical moment as massively overdetermined, our critical task should not be to redeem this mood by means of a belated hyperlucid method (historicism, deconstruction) but descriptively to capture the full scope of the emotive awareness that was romantic melancholy. As a result, the readings of Keats and Heine must recover a particularly expansive frame of theoretical and historical

reference in which they knew their writings to be inescapably embedded or ensnared. In the case of Heine, this means reconstructing his remarkably supple and complex relationship to the normative conception of High German, as both a vernacular and a “literary” language. Responding to the subaltern roles that German and “Germanness” were being assigned in the cultural, legal, and ethno-political retrenchment of the post-Napoleonic Restoration, Heine’s writings subject the idea of literature to linguistic and referential hybridization by injecting into it fragments of gossip, sexual innuendo, Yiddish expressions, and fragmentary tokens of high literary pathos that appear disconcertingly manufactured and staged. Given the fact that Heinrich Heine and, even more so, Joseph von Eichendorff are not as familiar as they might be to contemporary nineteenth-century literary and cultural studies—which, its interdisciplinary pretensions notwithstanding, remains overwhelmingly anglophone and monolingual—it will be appropriate to offer a somewhat richer historical picture. Still, in keeping with my central thesis—namely, that the (re-)construction of emotion as an aesthetic form, a “voice,” is a more reliable mode of access to history than the garden-variety methods of associative or contextual rumination—my individual chapters postpone historical sketches, such as of romantic conservatism or German-Jewish cultural and linguistic relations in the early nineteenth century, until the formal-aesthetic drama and intellectual plot has been firmly established through focused literary interpretation.

It goes without saying that, notwithstanding its area-studies and interdisciplinary orientation (or perhaps because of it), this book does not purport to offer sequential and uninterrupted historical accounts of British and German romantic cultural and literary life. To be sure, historical facts, events, and practices—censorship, territorial changes, demographic and economic shifts, fledgling constitutional debates—are addressed at various turns in my argument, though only inasmuch as they accentuate a formal and hence ideological dynamic also apparent in the literature under discussion. This restriction should not be construed as a reactionary call on my part for identification with the transcendent gestures that can be found at various turns in the writings of some (though surely not all) of the authors under discussion. At the same time, it would be unwise to dismiss such transhistorical claims in Eichendorff or Wordsworth outright. The transcendent orientation of literature should not preemptively be collapsed back into a historical matrix against which—successfully or not—it had sought to establish itself; nor can it ever be understood without consideration of the historical antagonisms that *prima facie*

motivated and shaped its articulate emergence *as* literature. Rather, in dissenting from the vexing determinacy of history as it reproduces itself in often rigid and irrational languages and beliefs, literature does not simply imagine some dreamworld but aims to recover a knowledge occluded by the specious, indeed irrational, fixity and coherence of so-called actual history.¹⁰ From Kant, Godwin, Wordsworth, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche to Freud and Lacan, the basic interpretive figure at issue here posits that all empirical experience and culture broadly speaking acquires its formal consistency and social significance at the expense of another (transcendental, unconscious) experience—the real, or “history”—that has necessarily been “missed.” This study’s exploration of paranoia, trauma and, to a certain extent, melancholy rests on the fundamental validity of that explanatory model. Inasmuch as, at its most genuine, all literature unfolds as an attempt to imagine and articulate values, it involves a strong counterfactual dissenting strain. For a value, properly so called, can come into focus only *ex negativo* and *a posteriori*, that is, as something belatedly found to have been occluded or repressed by the Lacanian symbolic broadly speaking—that is, by historical tradition, present necessity, accepted morality, or aesthetic decorum, and the like. Hence the language of literature tends to be oriented toward an as yet unknown, perhaps unpresentable “openness”—which, in an expression anterior to the distinction between literal and figurative speech, Hölderlin calls “*das Offene*.”

Another desired implication of this project for the future of romantic studies has to do with its attempt to reclaim a broader European focus for a field thus far sadly unresponsive to a geographical and interdisciplinary widening of its critical lenses. At a time when university administrators frequently hijack the language of interdisciplinarity as a rationale for undermining the institutional autonomy of traditional departments and downsizing faculty and associated costs, it seems especially important to articulate the intellectual potential of broadly synthesizing forms of argumentation. All too long, the teaching and study of romanticism has been unduly constrained by its historically unjustifiable subspecialization as “British romantic studies,” premised, as it happens, on a typically unexamined concept of nationhood and on equally dubious notions of canonical tradition and curricular order as its entailments. For romanticism no less than for modernism, national boundaries—like the monolithic idea of a “national literature” itself—ultimately always prove artificial and vexing—not a location, certainly not a home, but most typically a noble word for social, intellectual, and aesthetic constraints. The Cockney

John Keats, the German-Jewish Heinrich Heine, and the *altkonservativ* Catholic Joseph von Eichendorff all “felt” themselves to be political, cultural, and linguistic exiles, and Heine was also a geographic exile (one of the some 60,000 German expatriates in Paris in the Metternich era).

All these vectors converge and become legible in especially powerful ways in the melancholic texture of Keats’s and Heine’s writings, an anti-literature revelatory of an acutely dissociated linguistic, aesthetic, and political sensibility. There, melancholy and its conceptual next of kin, resentment, arise from a deeply felt alienation and aversion to the emergent hegemony of the nation—an imagined community of middle-class, professionally trained, gentile subjects justifying and reinforcing its specious coherence by worshipping the *imago* of a national literature. Rather than falling back on the questionable genre-based coherence of old-style “comparative literature” models, however, this study advocates that romantic studies henceforth attempt to trace the experience of history through its epistemological, discursive, and ideological effects across a broader spectrum of European culture. Such an “area-studies” model, to which romanticism as a field ought to look in the interest of its continued and broad relevance, has already gained firm footing in some parts of the European university system; and there are signs that it may finally have begun to establish communications among an excessively large number of subspecializations and disciplines (British, American, and foreign-language literary studies, critical theory, the “new musicology,” nonquantitative political science, and cultural anthropology) that have lived institutional parallel lives far too long.