

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



FICTION IN THE
ROMANTIC PERIOD

*Edited by Richard Maxwell
and Katie Trumpener*

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ROMANTIC PERIOD

EDITED BY
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CHRONOLOGY: LITERATURE, CULTURE AND HISTORY IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

- 1759 Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* published in York (London publication follows, 1760)
- 1760 Accession of George III to the throne of Great Britain
- 1762 Catherine the Great seizes power in Russia
Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*
James Macpherson, *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem*
Horace Walpole tours the gardens at Stourhead
- 1763 End of the Seven Years' War
- 1764 Death of William Hogarth
"Musing among the ruins of the Capitol," Edward Gibbon determines to write *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (published 1776–88)
- 1765 [Oliver Goldsmith?], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*
Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*
Horace Walpole, *Castle of Otranto*
- 1766 Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Derbyshire, where he begins writing his *Confessions* (published 1776–88)
Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*
- 1767 Adam Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*
- 1768 Captain Cook sails for the Pacific (returning 1771)
- 1769 Famine in Bengal: c. 10 million people die
- 1770 Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*
- 1771 Henry MacKenzie, *The Man of Feeling*
Tobias Smollet, *Humphry Clinker*

- 1773 Boston Tea Party
- 1774 Perpetual copyright declared illegal
Goethe, *Sorrows of Young Werther*
- 1776 (American) Declaration of Independence
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
- 1777 Thomas Chatterton, *Poems, Supposed to Have Been Written at Bristol*, By Thomas Rowley
- 1780 Gordon Riots in London
- 1781 Friedrich von Schiller, *Die Räuber*
- 1782 Helenus Scott, *The Adventures of a Rupee*
Pierre Laclos, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*
- 1783 George Crabbe, *The Village*
Sophia Lee, first part of *The Recess* (completed 1785)
- 1785 James Boswell, *Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides*
Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*
- 1786 Death of Frederick the Great of Prussia
William Beckford, *Vathek*
- 1788 John Soane's Bank of England (destroyed 1833)
- 1787 Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish Poetry*
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte, *Don Giovanni*
- 1789 The fall of the Bastille
Gilbert White, *Natural History of Selborne*
- 1790 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
For the first time, J. W. M. Turner exhibits a painting at the Royal Academy
- 1791 William Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*
James Boswell, begins publishing *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (completed 1799)
Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (completed 1792)
- 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*
Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

- 1793 Louis XVI executed in France
William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*
Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House*
Tom Paine's *Jests*
- 1794 William Godwin, *Adventures of Caleb Williams*
Thomas Holcroft, *Hugh Trevor*
Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*
- 1795 Warren Hastings acquitted by House of Lords in East India Company scandals
Hannah More begins publishing her *Cheap Repository Tracts*
- 1796 Vaccination for smallpox introduced by Edward Jenner
Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*
Robert Bage, *Hermesprong*
- 1797 Thomas Bewick, *History of British Birds*, Vol. I (Vol. II, 1804)
Abbé Barruel, *Memoirs, Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*
- 1798 Charles Brocken Brown, *Wieland*
William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge publish *Lyrical Ballads*
Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principles of Population*
United Irishmen's Uprising
- 1799 Alexander von Humboldt begins five years of exploration in South America (*Voyage aux régions équinoxiales de Humboldt et Bonpland*, published 1805-34)
- 1800 Act of Union with Ireland
Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*
- 1801 Thomas Jefferson elected President of the United States by the House of Representatives
After years of leading a slave rebellion, Toussaint L'Overture controls all of Haiti. (In 1802, he is overthrown by Napoleon, who restores slavery.)
- 1802 Madame Tussaud's exhibition of wax figures opens in London (her Baker Street Museum 1835)
Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (Vols. I and II; 3rd volume published 1803)
Frances Jeffrey founds the *Edinburgh Review*

- William Cobbet begins to write the *Weekly Political Register*
 François René Chateaubriand, *Génie du christianisme*
- 1803 Louisiana Purchase negotiated by Thomas Jefferson
 Humphry Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*
- 1804 Napoleon crowns himself Emperor of France
 Beethoven, the “Eroica” Symphony
- 1805 Sarah Catherine Martin, *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog*
 Ludwig van Beethoven, *Fidelio*
 The Battle of Trafalgar (and the death of Nelson)
- 1806 Abolition of the Holy Roman Empire
 Lady Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl*
- 1807 Abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire
 Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*
- 1808 Statutory copyright period extended from fourteen years to twenty eight years (further extensions in 1814 and 1842)
 Goethe, *Faust I*
- 1809 *Quarterly Review* founded
- 1810 George Crabbe, *The Borough*
 Jane Porter, *The Scottish Chiefs*
 Jane and Ann Taylor, *Hymns for Infant Minds*
- 1811 The future George IV becomes Regent, replacing his deranged father
 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*
- 1812 Napoleon’s invasion of Russia and devastating retreat from it
 War of 1812 (between Britain and the United States)
 Thomas Rowlandson, *The Tour of Dr. Syntax* (sequels 1820, 1821)
- 1813 Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
- 1814 Napoleon exiled to Elba
 Duke of Sutherland begins clearances of tenants on his estates, replacing them with sheep
 Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*

- Walter Scott, *Waverley*
Mrs. Sherwood, *Little Henry and His Bearer*
- 1815 Napoleon escapes from Elba and is defeated at Waterloo; Louis XVIII returns to France
Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder und Hausmärchen*
John Nash begins to remodel the Royal Pavilion at Brighton for George IV (finished 1823)
- 1816 Jane Austen, *Emma*
Walter Scott, *Old Mortality*
- 1817 Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*
James Mill, *The History of British India*
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine launched
- 1818 Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion* (published posthumously)
Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*
Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey*
Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian*
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Ludwig van Beethoven, *Hammerklavier Sonata*
- 1819 The Peterloo Massacre
Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (cantos I and II)
Mary Russell Mitford, *Our Village*
Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book*
Theodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*
- 1820 Accession of George IV to the throne of Great Britain
John Keats, *Lamia*, *Isabella*, *Even of St. Agnes*, *Hyperion*, and *Other Poems*
Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*
Percy Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*
- 1821 Pierce Egan, *Life in London*
John Galt, *Annals of the Parish*
Jean Champollion deciphers the Rosetta Stone
- 1822 George IV visits Scotland (and Scott, who orchestrates the trip)
Lord Byron, *The Vision of Judgement*
John Galt, *The Provost*

- James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man*
Eugène Delacroix exhibits *Dante and Virgil*
- 1824 Accession of Charles X to the throne of France
James Hogg, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*
James Morier, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*
Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet*
John Constable's *The Hay Wain* exhibited at the Louvre
- 1825 John Nash lays out Regent's Street in London
Alessandro Manzoni begins publishing *I Promessi Sposi* (completed 1826)
- 1826 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*
James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*
- 1828 Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*
- 1830 Accession of William IV to the throne of Great Britain
Revolution of 1830 brings Louis-Philippe to the throne of France
Frederick Marryat, *The King's Own*
Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique*
- 1831 Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*
Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Guiding the People*
- 1832 Goethe, *Faust II*
- 1834 Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*

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Introduction

This *Companion* offers an introduction to British fiction written between roughly the mid-1760s and the early 1830s. Across Europe, these seventy years encompass a large number of artistic works conceived in Romantic styles: symphonies by Ludwig van Beethoven, picturesque landscape gardens, paintings by Eugène Delacroix, the visionary domestic architecture of Sir John Soane, and the Gothic novel. Yet many novels and tales of these decades are not identifiably Romantic in style or sensibility. On the whole, the era may be characterized less by a unifying artistic sensibility than it is by a spirit of experimentation, and an overall political situation, a civic unrest traceable throughout Europe and North America.

The period was turbulent. The Russians, under Catherine the Great, fought the Ottoman empire (1768–74), while waging a less direct battle against their allies, the Bourbons of France, and fomenting political unrest on a European scale. One country affected was Greece, where Catherine's agents helped start a revolution against Turkish rule; the conflict lasted decades, becoming celebrated for its horrors and heroism. Catherine's domestic troubles included the peasants' revolt led by Pugachev (a Cossack soldier and pretender to the Russian throne, executed in 1775). Meanwhile, as historian Franco Venturi observes, rebellions and insurrections of many different kinds broke out all over Europe, especially "in unexpected and peripheral places."¹ Among the countries affected were Corsica, Montenegro, Bohemia, Geneva, Denmark, and Sweden, each in turn seeming to provide another view of a confusing new world in revolt against old forms of social order. The culminating event of these decades of crisis was, of course, the French Revolution (beginning in 1789), with the long, bloody aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, but the French upheaval was not an isolated event; almost everywhere in Europe, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, a major realignment seemed to be under way.

Older portrayals of the Romantic period often suggested its relative insulation from instability. Many recent historians and critics disagree. Venturi's