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Introduction: Romantic Studies and the "Shorter Industrial Revolution"

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The essays published here make the case that Romantic literary studies has much to learn from recent scholarship in economic history.[1] The economic historiography of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries offers new ways to understand the connections between Romantic literary and cultural formations on the one hand, and on the other, fundamental changes in Britain's social and demographic conditions, its technological development, and its colonial, mercantile, and ecological relations. Most of all, these essays propose that a Romantic studies made newly responsive to economic concerns might have at its heart a new kind of ecocriticism.

The collection's title is from the eighth book of *The Excursion* (1814), a book dominated by Wordsworth's reflections on the rise of the manufacturing system:

> An inventive Age
> Has wrought, if not with speed of magic, yet
> To most strange issues. I have lived to mark
> A new and unforeseen Creation rise
> From out the labours of a peaceful Land,
> Wielding her potent Enginery to frame
> And to produce, with appetite as keen
> As that of War, which rests not night or day,
> Industrious to destroy![2]

[1] I am grateful to Jocelyn Betts, Peter Maw, and the contributors to this special issue for help and advice. This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, through grant no. AH/S012281/1.

[2] William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, ed. Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 8:89–97. See Mary Wedd, "Industrialization and the Moral Law in Books VIII

The epithet that the Wanderer (in whose mouth Wordsworth puts these lines) chooses for the age might at first recall the heroic myth of Romantic-period Britain's industrial development as the accomplishment of a few great inventors.[3] His second sentence describes something different: an emergent "Creation" generated without conscious purpose out of interactions between "labours" with smaller ends in view. The appetites that urge on those labours are handled with ambivalence. Are they the contrary or only the obverse of warlike impulses? Notwithstanding the long decades of war with France, Wordsworth's invocation of "a peaceful Land" is evidently a sincere account of the nation's supposed inward character. The assertion that Britain has redirected violent energies and technologies towards peaceful flourishing is not lightly made, as the Wanderer's extended meditation on the manufacturing system goes on to show. But that meditation's pessimistic side is at least equally forceful. Above all, the Wanderer denounces night-labour and child labour in the mills: a compulsion that itself "rests not night or day / Industrious," and thereby hauntingly resembles the acts of war to which it had promised an alternative.

Wordsworth's "inventive Age" implies something more than an epoch of mechanical ingenuity. His poetry typically uses "inventive" and its cognates in senses of creative or playful contrivance, as with the "old inventive Poets" of the twentieth *River Duddon* sonnet or when, in the previous book of *The Excursion*, a merry clergyman deflects personal questions with "inventive humour" (7:100). In "Stanzas written in my Pocket copy of the Castle of Indolence," Coleridge has the gift of "inventions rare" to amuse and entertain.

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and IX of *The Excursion*," *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, ns. 81 (1993): 5–25; Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of "Culture"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 160–81; Rudolf Beck, "From Industrial Georgic to Industrial Sublime: English Poetry and the Early Stages of the Industrial Revolution," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 32–34.

[3] That myth would in fact be more fully established in the 1820s. See Christine MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity, 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Coleridge himself employed the word in *Religious Musings* almost as a technical term for the fine arts as such when they arise in the course of society's progress:

> all th' inventive arts, that nurs'd the soul
> To forms of beauty, and by sensual wants
> Unsensualiz'd the mind.[4]

In this usage, the "inventive arts" are the groundwork of the spirit's highest aspirations. *The Excursion*'s reference to an "inventive Age" might thus suggest both a preponderance of barren calculation and a means of redemption from mere instrumentalism. It designates an age in which various kinds of creativity and imaginative possibility could be either liberated or confounded by others. Wordsworth explained in a note that when describing the characteristics of the age he had felt "compelled" to "dwell upon the baneful effects arising out of an ill-regulated and excessive application of powers . . . admirable in themselves."[5] His treatment of "manufacturing industry," while certainly conservative in orientation, was by no means simply rejectionist. Perhaps most notable of all, in this context, was simply the intensity with which he perceived the manufacturing "Creation" as novel, strange, and hardly less than magical.

Responses to economic transformation in British Romantic writing often involved complexities of the kind signalled by Wordsworth's phrase, and a comparable sense of wonder or sublimity. "Nothing seems too bold," John Aikin wrote in 1795, for "the commercial interest of this country . . . to undertake, too difficult for it to atchieve . . . its future progress is beyond the reach of calculation." The Manchester cotton industry was "a branch of commerce, the rapid and prodigious increase of which is, perhaps, absolutely

[4] *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano (New York: Norton, 2004), 20–34, lines 222–24
[5] Wordsworth, *Excursion*, 314.

unparalleled in the annals of trading nations."[6] Such increase was often dated to the 1770s, as by Robert Southey in 1812: "during the last forty years, a tremendous change has been going on. . . . The manufacturing system has been carried among us to an extent unheard of in any former age or country."[7] Patrick Colquhoun declared in 1814 that "it is impossible to contemplate the progress of manufactures in Great Britain within the last thirty years without wonder and astonishment. Its rapidity, particularly since the commencement of the French revolutionary war, exceeds all credibility."[8] Robert Owen wrote a year later that "thirty or forty years ago . . . Britain was essentially agricultural," but the subsequent "rapid and extraordinary" growth in trade and manufactures had been "such as to astonish and confound the most enlightened statesmen both at home and abroad" and to "effect an essential change in the general character of the mass of the people."[9]

In 1820 Walter Scott eulogised James Watt as "the man whose genius discovered the means of multiplying our national resources to a degree beyond perhaps even his own stupendous powers of calculation . . . [a] magician, whose cloudy machinery has produced a change on the world, the effects of which, extraordinary as they are, are perhaps only now beginning to be felt."[10] Soon afterwards, the former Glasgow weaver Alex Richmond looked back on the era since the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776): "The discoveries and improvements . . . tending to supersede and abridge human labour, have called forth energies and produced results which have astonished the present age . . . almost a total revolution has been effected in the whole frame of society."[11] By the early 1830s Peter Gaskell was

[6] John Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* (London: John Stockdale, 1795), 136, 3.
[7] Robert Southey, "Inquiry into the Poor Laws, &c.," *Quarterly Review* 8, no. 16 (December, 1812): 337.
[8] Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Wealth, Power, and Resources, of the British Empire* (London: Joseph Mawman, 1814), 68.
[9] Robert Owen, "Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System," in *The Selected Works of Robert Owen*, ed. Gregory Claeys, 4 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), 1:111–12.
[10] Walter Scott, *The Monastery*, ed. Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 25.
[11] Alex Richmond, *Narrative of the Condition of the Manufacturing Population* (London: John Miller, 1824), 1.

reflecting on "the conversion of a great people, in little more than the quarter of a century, from agriculturalists to manufacturers." The result was "a picture, as strange and as deeply interesting, as any in the whole circle of the history of mankind."[12] Edward Baines junior agreed that the growth of the cotton manufacture was "a spectacle unparalleled in the annals of industry," one that "mocks all that the most romantic imagination could have previously conceived possible under any circumstances."[13]

"Sixty, eighty years ago," Friedrich Engels wrote in the early 1840s, "England was a country like every other. . . . Today it is a country like *no* other." "The history of English industrial development in the past sixty years [is] a history which has no counterpart in the annals of humanity."[14] Engels referred to that development with a portentous phrase: it was an "industrial revolution [*industriellen Revolution*]." Like "Romanticism," "the Industrial Revolution" is a largely retrospective term, trans-European in origin.[15] But well before that term became widespread in English, Romantic-period writers testified to the remarkable energy of Britain's burgeoning industrial capitalism, large-scale machine production, urban growth, and global commerce in manufactured goods.[16]

Joel Mokyr's landmark history of the Industrial Revolution begins in terms that recall those contemporary witnesses: "historians of every nation are disproportionately interested in what happened in Britain in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because . . . this is the era in which modern economic growth was 'invented'—a phenomenon unprecedented in human

[12] Peter Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833), 10, 3.
[13] Edward Baines, Jr., *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* (London: Fisher, Fisher and Jackson, 1835), 6, 112.
[14] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, trans. Florence Kelley-Wischnewetsky, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 28.
[15] Gareth Stedman Jones, "National Bankruptcy and Social Revolution: European Observers on Britain, 1813–1844," in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688–1914*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick K. O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 61–92.
[16] See especially William Hardy's revealing and under-studied *The Origins of the Idea of the Industrial Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Shepperton: Aidan, 2014).

history."[17] Even that assertion is less forceful than Eric Hobsbawm's, in a text long familiar to Romanticists: that the Industrial Revolution was "probably the most important event in world history, at any rate since the invention of agriculture and cities."[18] That event had deep roots. Late medieval England already employed a remarkably high share of its workforce outside agriculture.[19] And it unfolded gradually: outside the cotton sector, writes Maxine Berg, "the rise of the factory system was a long drawn-out affair taking until the mid- to late nineteenth century."[20] Nonetheless, wider chronological perspectives such as these often tend more to redefine than to diminish the pivotal importance of the years around 1800.

When Hobsbawm was writing, the prevailing view was that British economic growth had accelerated significantly in the 1780s. That claim was later subjected to searching critique by revisionist historians who argued that overall growth was slow before the 1820s. The industrial sector of 1770—wool, leather, building, linen, brewing—was already large. Swift modernisation thereafter in cotton and iron did not imply rapid expansion of British industry as a whole.[21] That position, however, earned scrutiny in its turn.[22] And even the leading revisionists themselves retained the principle that, "notwithstanding the [downward] revisions

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[17] Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution, 1700–1850* (London: Penguin, 2011), 3.
[18] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962), 44.
[19] Non-agricultural employment grew further in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such that by 1700, agriculture's share of the British labour force was perhaps as low as 39%, against 34% in industry. Those shares changed only modestly in the eighteenth century: the marked alterations were in technology, productivity, and work organisation rather than occupational structure. Stephen Broadberry, Bruce Campbell, and Bas van Leeuwen, "When did Britain Industrialise? The Sectoral Distribution of the Labour Force and Labour Productivity in Britain, 1381–1851," *Explorations in Economic History* 50, no. 1 (2013): 23.
[20] Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), 178. As late as 1861, "only about 30 percent of the labor force was employed in activities that had been radically transformed in technique since 1780: railways, ships, mining, metal and machines, chemicals and textiles, and a handful of smaller industries (such as pottery)." D. McCloskey, "The Industrial Revolution 1780–1860: A Survey," in *The Economics of the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Joel Mokyr (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 58.
[21] C. Knick Harley, "British Industrialization Before 1841: Evidence of Slower Growth During the Industrial Revolution," *Journal of Economic History* 42, no. 2 (1982): 267–89; N. F. R. Crafts, "British Economic Growth, 1700–1831: A Review of the Evidence," *Economic History Review* 36, no. 2 (1983): 177–99. See also David Cannadine's historiographical survey, "The Present and the Past in the English Industrial Revolution 1880–1980," *Past & Present* 103 (1984): 131–72.
[22] Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, "Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review* 45, no. 1 (1992): 24–50.

[they had] proposed to estimates of growth, 'over the period 1750–1850 the growth of the British economy was historically unique and internationally remarkable'"; their analysis "reaffirm[ed] the importance of the industrial revolution as an historical discontinuity."[23] As Emma Griffin explains, the upshot of the debate that the revisionists sparked was not consensus but instead a scattering of attention away from the question of overall national growth rates. The existence of some kind of "historical discontinuity" remained widely agreed upon. Yet there developed numerous competing accounts of what the "Industrial Revolution" really was.[24] The so-called classic period of the Industrial Revolution, from 1760 or 1770 to 1820 or 1830, has thus retained its full significance in the specialist literature even as new topics and new methodologies have come to the fore.[25]

My own title above is taken from Knick Harley, who in an offhand but useful turn of phrase made reference to "the shorter Industrial Revolution (implicitly, say, 1770 to 1830)."[26] That period, from *The Deserted Village* to Thomas Carlyle's diagnosis of "the Age of Machinery" in "Signs of the Times," is the focus of this collection. It is an interval that begins with the so-called *annus mirabilis* of 1769, when James Watt and Richard Arkwright respectively patented the separate-condenser steam engine and the water frame spinning machine.[27] It ends as a cluster of phenomena in the early 1830s signal the transition to a new era of public anxiety about the "factory system": the Reform Bill crisis, the Slavery Abolition Act and the

[23] N. F. R. Crafts and C. K. Harley, "Output Growth and the British Industrial Revolution: A Restatement of the Crafts-Harley View," *Economic History Review* 45, no. 4 (1992): 704 (quoting Patrick O'Brien), 721.
[24] Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave, 2018).
[25] The "classic" account was pioneered in Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England* (London: Rivingtons, 1884), rpt. as *Toynbee's Industrial Revolution* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1969). See also T. S. Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution, 1760–1830*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), first published 1948. The contrarian and minority argument that there was no "industrial revolution" in England before 1832, but only incremental advances in work practices and commerce, is made in J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially 446–70.
[26] C. Knick Harley, review of Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, *EH.net* (December, 2010), https://eh.net/book_reviews/the-enlightened-economy-an-economic-history-of-britain-1700-1850/.
[27] Joel Mokyr, borrowing Donald Cardwell's phrase, "An Age of Progress," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain: Volume 1, 1700–1870*, ed. Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 264–91.

New Poor Law; the factory reform movement and trades union agitation; the Liverpool–Manchester railway; importations of guano and of cholera; seminal publications by James Kay, Harriet Martineau, Peter Gaskell, and Andrew Ure.

The time and place of British Romanticism coincides more or less closely with an episode of economic restructuring that has had transformative worldwide implications. However labyrinthine were the connections between industrial and literary production, Romanticists have a compelling incentive to address their field's imbrication with secular processes of economic modernisation. But in contrast to literary scholars' systematic inquiries into the political and social history of the period, interdisciplinary exchanges with research in economic history have hitherto been confined to individual studies.[28] Romanticists have produced invaluable accounts of the history of economic and especially monetary thought, the economics of authorship and the book trade, and specific economic crises of the 1790s and 1810s. In recent times, however, they have approached the larger transformations of the age only with great circumspection.[29]

It has been an opportunity missed, because for their part, economic historians' accounts of Britain's unique developmental path increasingly address the full complexity of Romantic-

[28] Examples include Daniela Garofalo's deployment of scholarship by Maxine Berg and others on the economic history of consumption in *Women, Love, and Commodity Culture in British Romanticism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Peter Kitson, *Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange 1760–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), which is framed by debates in world-systems analysis between Andre Gunder Frank and Giovanni Arrighi; Stephen Tedeschi's attention to the economics of urbanization, in work by E. A. Wrigley and Jan de Vries, in *Urbanization and English Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Tobias Menely's *Climate and the Making of Worlds: Towards a Geohistorical Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), which responds to Wrigley's and Andreas Malm's histories of energy economics. Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of "Culture"*, is a signal related contribution.

[29] A legacy of ambitious inquiry, often broadly Marxist in inspiration, can be found in work of the mid-twentieth century: Humphey Jennings, *Pandæmonium, 1660–1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers*, ed. Mary-Lou Jennings and Charles Madge (London: Deutsch, 1985); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1968); Francis Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, ed. and rev. Arthur Alton (St Albans: Paladin, 1972); Jacob Bronowski, *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); Ivanka Kovačević, *Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene, 1750–1850* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975).

period society. A mainstream economic-historiographical tradition shares a considerable body of source material with Romantic studies. This is the tradition that emphasizes the contribution made to the Industrial Revolution by Britain's culture of innovation, the life-world out of which grew technological developments in steam, textiles, metallurgy, chemistry, and machine- and instrument-making. Mokyr's account of an "Industrial Enlightenment," for instance, has at its heart the associational worlds of Erasmus Darwin, Joseph Priestley, Dugald Stewart, and Humphry Davy. Deirdre McCloskey locates the ultimate origin of modern economic liberty and growth in a rhetorical shift—a "Bourgeois Revaluation"— exemplified by Samuel Johnson and Jane Austen. Margaret Jacob highlights the midland and northern English nexus of Newtonian mechanical knowledge, Unitarianism, and the Literary and Philosophical Societies.[30] That culture of innovation intersects at numerous points with such primary concerns of modern Romanticists as education, publishing, sociability, gentility, Dissent, improvement, urbanism, Scottishness, domestic tour and travel writing, and the reception of natural philosophy.[31]

Engagement with another broad tradition in economic history-writing could serve to foster current global and decolonial agendas in Romantic studies. The exploitation of overseas labour, markets, and ecosystems was critical to the Industrial Revolution. International commerce and colonial plunder not only contributed to metropolitan capital accumulation but also shaped domestic cultures and institutions. The mechanization of the British cotton industry was impelled by competition in world export markets with the Indian cottons that

[30] Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*; Deirdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); McCloskey, *Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Margaret Jacob, *The First Knowledge Economy: Human Capital and the European Economy, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Recent critiques of this tradition include Patrick O'Brien, "Was the British Industrial Revolution a Conjuncture in Global Economic History?," *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 1 (2022): 128–150.
[31] See especially Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who Made the Future, 1730–1810* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).

constituted the global benchmarks for price and quality.[32] Industrial manufactures in northern England relied in significant part on credit systems first elaborated through the slave trade.[33] The issues are live ones: the "new historians of capitalism" have stimulated intense recent debate through their re-analysis of the role played by state power and coerced labour in the take-off of industrial capitalism, epitomised by the explosive refuelling of the British manufacturing system with US slave-grown cotton from the 1790s onwards.[34]

Both of those traditions are touched on in the essays that follow. Inevitably, many other paths are left unexplored. Romanticists surely have much to learn from the vigorous current debate—being conducted by Robert Allen, Jane Humphries, Judy Stephenson, John Styles, and others—about the degree to which England possessed a "high wage economy," with its pressing implications for Romantic-period writing on social issues and on the state of the nation in a European context. Likewise, current research on England's changing demographic regime and the economics of female and child labour could help Romanticists to reconsider the period's cultures of courtship and marriage, childbearing and childrearing, and gender and the domestic virtues.[35] Literary scholars might reckon with the significant contribution of economically minded historians—Humphries, Griffin, Carolyn Steedman—to the study of

[32] Stephen Broadberry and Bishnupriya Gupta, "Lancashire, India, and Shifting Competitive Advantage in Cotton Textiles, 1700–1850: The Neglected Role of Factor Prices," *Economic History Review* 62, no. 2 (2009): 279–305; Alka Raman, "Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialization: Evidence of Comparative Learning in the British Cotton Industry in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Economic History Review*, published electronically January 17, 2022, doi.org/10.1111/ehr.13143

[33] Pat Hudson, "Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Economic Growth: A Contribution to the Debate," in *Emancipation and the Remaking of the British Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, and Keith McClelland, 36–59 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014). See also Joseph Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and, on connections between Eurasian and Atlantic trade flows, Giorgio Riello, "Cotton Textiles and the Industrial Revolution in a Global Context," *Past & Present*, published electronically November 20, 2021, doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtab016.

[34] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2015). Responses include Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, "Cotton, Slavery, and the New History of Capitalism," *Explorations in Economic History* 67 (2018): 1–17; Gavin Wright, "Slavery and Anglo-American Capitalism Revisited," *Economic History Review* 73, no. 2 (2020): 353–83.

[35] Especially provocative in this regard is Emma Griffin, "A Conundrum Resolved? Rethinking Courtship, Marriage and Population Growth in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present* 215 (2012): 125–64.

working-class autobiography, and with how interpretations of industrial change in terms of a "product revolution" or "industrious revolution"—by scholars such as Maxine Berg and Jan de Vries—serve to re-embed familiar Romantic discourses of luxury, elegance, politeness and metropolitanism within changing relations of production, supply, and work discipline.

This collection, however, has a different emphasis. We hope that these essays will contribute to the rethinking of Romantic ecocriticism, and of ecocriticism's place in Romantic studies. Economic phenomena cannot finally be separated from ecological ones. Interpretations of Britain's industrialization have often prioritised shifting energy regimes (mostly the rise of coal), agricultural productivity, and the intersection of political power with geographical endowments.[36] The present global environmental crisis is an invitation to understand the Industrial Revolution less as an evolutionary breakthrough to indefinitely self-sustaining technological progress, and more as a fork on to a path of carbon- and resource-intensive production that entails still unfinished reorganisations of the living world and climate system.[37] Whereas Romantic ecocriticism has long been grounded on an account of Romanticism as the origin of modern environmental consciousness, these essays point towards an alternative grounding in the literary-critical history of the "shorter Industrial Revolution."[38] Less affirmatory in spirit, that kind of Romantic ecocriticism might be better placed to contribute towards an unillusioned and useable genealogy of the present global environmental crisis.

[36] Among a vast literature, see Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Robert Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); E. A. Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016).
[37] Fredrick Albritton Jonsson, "The Industrial Revolution in the Anthropocene," *Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 3 (2012): 679–96.
[38] Jeremy Davies, "Romantic Ecocriticism: History and Prospects," *Literature Compass* 15 (9): e12489.

In the United Kingdom, the Industrial Revolution continues to occupy a large place in popular national historical memory. Romanticists are better placed than is usually acknowledged to contribute to the public understanding of industrialization's role in British social and cultural history. More pressingly, both main British political parties have presented their environmental policy agendas as programmes for a "Green Industrial Revolution." (The actual contents of the two programmes have little in common.)[39] Romantic ecocritics, at least those working in Britain, should attend to the Industrial Revolution not only in the interest of a richer understanding of the period's writing, but also for its importance in the rhetorical conflicts that will help shape climate and environmental policy in the years ahead.

This collection is made up of four original essays, followed by an essay-length response by Nigel Leask. We focus on Scotland and northern England, without seeking to imply that the experience of economic change was less significant elsewhere.[40] The work of E. A. Wrigley, who died as this collection was in the final stages of preparation, is a shared point of reference throughout, reflecting our collective interest in energy history, mobility, and the geography of industrialism. My own contribution recounts how domestic coal and the importation of land-intensive goods such as cotton and potash displaced the "land constraint" on British economic development, thereby enabling eighteenth-century economic expansion to continue through and beyond the Romantic decades. Against ecocritical claims of an abrupt late-eighteenth-century transition to ecological modernity, Anna Letitia Barbauld's poetry—notably 'The Invitation' (published 1773) and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812)—articulates the synthesis between dizzying novelty and historical continuity that

[39] *It's Time for Real Change: The Labour Party Manifesto 2019* (London: Labour Party, 2019), 9–25; *The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution* (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, November 18, 2020), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution.

[40] On circuits of industrial development linking Wales and London, for instance, see Mary-Ann Constantine, "Consumed Landscapes: Coal, Air and Circulation in the Writings of Catherine Hutton," *Romanticism* 27, no. 2 (2021): 122–34.

characterised the Romantic experience of environmental change. In the next essay, Jon Mee counterposes two texts quoted above, Aikin's *Description of the Country Round Manchester* (1795) and Baines' *History of the Cotton Manufacture* (1835). They exemplify two inimical theories of industrialization. Aikin's composite text proposes a kind of ecology of manufactures, whereby industrial innovation depends upon impulses circulating around a dispersed regional network. A generation later, by contrast, Baines tells a story of revolutionary advance in the "factory-steam system," such that history is impelled forward by heroic breakthroughs in machine technology.

Next, Siobhan Carroll locates Walter Scott in the context of Scotland's transition from an energy system in which wood and peat played substantial roles to one dominated by coal. Scott worried that those older fuels could be environmentally and socially deleterious. In *Waverley* (1814), however, he does not recount their inevitable supersession so much as stage a "cultural contest between different kinds of fuel use," although by the time of *Redgauntlet* (1824) the advance of energy modernity appears inexorable. In the fourth essay, Eric Gidal scrutinizes *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*'s interest in the new transport infrastructure of the 1820s. *Blackwood's* conservatism might have made it deeply suspicious of the instabilities associated with accelerated mobility. Yet in fact the magazine proved receptive to aspirational visions of transport modernity, which sponsored fresh formal possibilities for its quirkily self-reflexive fictions. Transport improvements could even reaffirm the local and regional identities that *Blackwood's* cherished, by enabling intensified economic specialization. Finally, Nigel Leask's response begins by situating the concerns of this collection in relation to the history of English literary studies. Drawing on Thomas Garnett's *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands* (1800), he demonstrates how comparison with the Scottish Highlands' distinctive experience of "industrial 'improvement'" can shed a different light on the topics of the four preceding essays. In particular, the Highland example

highlights the ways in which the developments on the British mainland were bound up with transformations of the Atlantic and colonial economy. That responding essay is a first example of the discussion and enquiry that we hope to provoke through the work presented in the following pages.

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