The repercussions of the French Revolution included erosion of many previously held certainties in Britain, as in the rest of Europe. Even the authority of language as a cornerstone of knowledge was called into question and the founding principles of intellectual disciplines challenged, as Romantic writers developed new ways of expressing their philosophy of the imagination and the human heart. This book traces the impact of revolution on language, from William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, to William Hazlitt, Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot. A leading scholar in Romantic literature and theology, John Beer offers a persuasive new account of post-revolutionary continuities between the major Romantic writers and their Victorian successors.

John Beer is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Cambridge, and Emeritus Fellow of Peterhouse. He has published widely on Romantic literature, especially on Coleridge, Wordsworth and Blake, as well as on Victorian and modern literature. He was Stanton Lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Cambridge for 2006–7.
ROMANTICISM, REVOLUTION AND LANGUAGE

The Fate of the Word from Samuel Johnson to George Eliot

JOHN BEER
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Preface and acknowledgments

This volume owes its origins to an invitation to give the Stanton Lectures in the Philosophy of Religion for 2006–7, eight of which were delivered in the Michaelmas term 2006 under the title ‘The Crisis of the Word in English Romantic Literature’. I am particularly grateful to the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Cambridge for this opportunity, which provided a basis for most of the chapters gathered here. A small amount of work in the book has been published previously: Chapter 4 is similar to my contribution to the volume 1800: The New Lyrical Ballads, edited by Nicola Trott and Seamus Perry (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), while a section of Chapter 10 (not among the lectures given in Cambridge) was offered for the Gaskell Centenary conference at Canterbury in July 2007, subsequently to be published in the Gaskell Society Journal.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Tom Mayberry, whose lecture on Coleridge in Somerset at an early Coleridge Summer Conference first drew my attention to the diary of William Holland and its significance.

The discussions of shifts in British culture during the relevant periods could profitably be complemented by reading recent work on social studies, notably E. P. Thompson’s The Making of the English Working Class (London: V. Gollancz, 1963).
Abbreviations


BQ Blake Newsletter: An Illustrated Quarterly, continued as Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly (Albuquerque, N.M.; Berkeley, Calif., 1970–).


Abbreviations

**CFriend**  

**CL**  

**CLects (1795)**  

**CLects (1808–19)**  

**CLects (1818–1819)**  

**CM**  

**CN**  

**COM**  

**CPL (1949)**  

**CPW (Beer)**  

**CPW (CC)**  

**CPW (EHC)**  

**CShC**  
Abbreviations

CSWF

CTT

CWatchman

DWJ

GEL

GL

GL2

HW

KL

KP

LL (Marrs)

PMLA
*Publications of the Modern Language Association* (Baltimore: 1889–).

RX

SW
## Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>TLS</td>
<td>Times Literary Supplement.</td>
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