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0521831687 - Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History

Kevis Goodman

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GEORGIC MODERNITY AND BRITISH ROMANTICISM

Poetry and the Mediation of History

This book traces connections between georgic verse and developments in other spheres that were placing unprecedented emphasis on mediation from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries: the mediation of perception by scientific instruments, of events by newspapers, of knowledge by the feelings, of the past by narrative. Kevis Goodman argues that because of the georgic's concern for the transmission of knowledge and the extension of the senses over time and space, the verse of this period, far from burying history in nature (a position more often associated with Romanticism), instead presents new ways of perceiving history in terms of sensation. In this way Goodman opens up the subject of georgic to larger areas of literary and cultural study including the history of the feelings and the prehistory of modern media concerns in relation to print culture and early scientific technology.

KEVIS GOODMAN is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. She has published articles in *Studies in Romanticism*, *ELH* and *South Atlantic Quarterly*.

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This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those “great national events” that were “almost daily taking place”: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion and literature were reworked in texts such as *Frankenstein* and *Biographia Literaria*; gender relations in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Don Juan*; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; poetic form, content and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of comment or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of ‘literature’ and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars, on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2004

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Adobe Garamond 11/12.5 pt *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 521 83168 7 hardback

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*For my parents,
Marjorie and David Z. Goodman,
one of a kind – each.*

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If it is remarkable that one book should have acquired so many debts of gratitude, it will always be a source of wonder and joy to me how much support this one has received. I am well aware how lucky I have been.

Lucky in my first mentors: Leslie Brisman and Geoffrey Hartman taught me how to read; later, as loyal friends, they never gave up when the dissertation they directed did not become a book. Great teachers are measured in their students' ability to diverge, as much as not. The influence of Geoffrey Hartman's body of published work, playful, diverse, and never labelable, will be apparent – maybe in those traits, too. At Yale, where I trained and first taught, I learned much from others on the faculty: Jill Campbell, who made eighteenth-century studies come alive, deserves special mention. So, too, do a number of colleagues now elsewhere: Heather James, Cathy Caruth, Priscilla Gilman, and Blakey Vermeule, whose auspicious dare, as it turned out, changed my career and my life.

Lucky, too, to move three thousand miles and find myself among such remarkable and inimitable colleagues at Berkeley, who welcomed me warmly and tolerated the unpredictable, sustaining it where it looked productive. It has been exciting to be a Romanticist here, thanks to Celeste Langan and Steve Goldsmith, who came first and set the brilliant standard, and to Ian Duncan and Anne-Lise François, who joined shortly afterwards – great sources of happiness and trust. These four scholars have read draft after draft, providing inspired commentary and equal patience. So did Catherine Gallagher, whose luminous insight and uncanny economy of expression one can only dream of attaining. I am also indebted to Richard Feingold and Paul Alpers for early tenacious support and to James Turner and George Starr for probing criticisms, productive misunderstandings, valuable bibliographic suggestions, and tolerating my border-crossings. For walks, talks, meals, and other forms of friendship, I thank Elizabeth Abel and Janet Adelman (who will know what I mean when I say that this is like touching

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the bush); Alex Zwerdling; Katie Snyder; and, from the beginning, Colleen Lye, Stephen Best, and Chris Nealon, all three ever “mod.”

The larger world of the academy has proved hospitable in ways I never expected, distinguished by the number who have performed completely unobligated acts of kindness. Long ago, Alan Liu took a first-year graduate student’s course paper very seriously when he did not have to and, in so doing, did much to make her feel real in this world; since then both he and his work have been presiding genii, if not of place. James Chandler intervened to rescue this book and its author from an uncertain future, displaying such genuine interest, enthusiasm, and efficiency as would be remarkable in a scholar one-eighth as busy and productive as he. David Simpson and Marshall Brown were no usual press readers: they read promptly at inconvenient times, contributed their wide learning and deep wit, and saw much that I didn’t. (All remaining shortcomings, including any scarcity of short, declarative topic sentences, are my own.) Along the way, portions or the entirety of this manuscript benefited greatly from the encouragement and scrupulous readings of Mary Favret, Susan Stewart and Peter Manning; an important earlier portion of this manuscript was written while subletting Peter’s Los Angeles home, living amidst his books and his good will. All of these scholars have modeled the kind of professional and friendly assistance one can only repay by extending some version of it to one’s own students and colleagues.

I owe thanks to a number of institutions, as well, for material support of this book. Research and writing were facilitated by generous grants from the University of California, including a Career Development Grant, a junior faculty fellowship from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, and a Humanities Research Fellowship. The last, combined with financial assistance from the Hellman Family Foundation, helped to supplement and make possible a year of research at the Huntington Library, where I held a Barbara Thom fellowship during 1999–2000. The air-conditioned halls of that library were warmed by the assistance, companionship, and laughter of many, particularly Jesse Matz, fellow traveler in many things, and the Huntington’s witty Director of Research, Roy Ritchie.

Helen Tartar has supported my work since I was in graduate school. I salute her formidable talents as an editor, noting the role of the many books she has brought into print in my own work. When this book moved to Cambridge University Press, I was extremely fortunate to come into the expert hands of Linda Bree, who acted promptly at a decisive moment, and has since then been at once professional and humane. I thank also Lesley Atkin for her hard work combating the perils of long endnotes and

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long distance copy-editing, and I am grateful to Duke University Press for permission to reprint an earlier version of part of Chapter 3, which appeared in *SAQ* 102 (2003).

The quotidian life of writing and manuscript preparation can be dreary, especially under the felt pressures of a tenure review, but mine has been cheered and sustained by a number of very special, gifted, graduate-student colleagues at Berkeley, who have taught with me, laughed with me, and in many cases, worked on the more laborious aspects of manuscript preparation. For inspired wit, intellectual exchange, research assistance, reading with excitement, proof-reading with care, and coping patiently with my notoriously bad typing skills, I am particularly grateful to Mike Farry, Michael Ferguson, Kathryn Evans, Paul Stasi and Nicholas Nace. Kimberly Johnson is as greatly gifted a friend as a poet, and Alison Hurley and Fiona Murphy have been a fund of information and conversation, eighteenth-century and otherwise.

At every stage, going back to 1988, Cliff Spargo has helped to sharpen my thought and bring many a precarious idea into existence; he has discussed every page of this manuscript and its several discarded precursors, during which time he has written at least three of his own. I am honored by his friendship and collaboration.

My originary and greatest debt is expressed by the dedication. From Gramercy Park to Berkeley: *hic est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis*.