

## LATE ROMANTICISM AND THE END OF POLITICS

In the late Romantic age, demands for political change converged with thinking about the end of the world. This book examines writings by Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, and their circle that imagined the end, from poems by Byron that pictured fallen empires, sinking islands, and dying stars to the making and unmaking of populations in *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*. These works intersected with and enclosed reflections upon brewing political changes. By imagining political dynasties, slavery, parliament, and English law reaching an end, writers challenged liberal visions of the political future that viewed the basis of governance as permanently settled. The prospect of volcanic eruptions and biblical deluges, meanwhile, pointed toward new political worlds, forged in the ruins of this one. These visions of coming to an end acquire added resonance in our own time, as political and planetary end-times converge once again.

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# LATE ROMANTICISM AND THE END OF POLITICS

*Byron, Mary Shelley, and the Last Men*

JOHN OWEN HAVARD

*Binghamton University*



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The discussion of Swift in Chapter 1 incorporates material from my “Swift’s Political Climates,” forthcoming in *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*. The first section of Chapter 5 draws on my “What Freedom? *Frankenstein*, Anti-Occidentalism, and English Liberty,”

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## *Abbreviations*

- BLJ* *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Marchand, 12 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1973–82).
- CPW* *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980–93).
- Hansard* Hansard, UK Parliament Online.
- JMS* *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814–1844*, eds. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- LM* Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Anne McWhir (Peterborough: Broadview, 1996).
- LMS* *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
- ODNB* Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online.