# *Introduction*
## *Border raids as cultural practice*

The story of Romanticism is told as a tale of two generations, two "moments": in this account, the "first" generation of Romantic poets burst onto the artistic scene in the 1790s, following upon the heels of the French Revolution; the "second" generation, growing up in the shadow of war, wrote most of their poetry in the aftermath of Waterloo and drew upon the work of their elders to explore not the blissful dawn of the Revolution's first days but the grim twilight of reaction and "despondency," to use Wordsworth's term from his monumental *Excursion*, written to bury revolution in its church graveyard. The distortions of this tale of fathers and sons are many: forcing us to cut short the careers of Blake, Coleridge, and particularly Wordsworth, all of whom outlived the younger generation, to make way for Byron, Shelley, and Keats; masking the centrality of women writers in the era; privileging a story of intergenerational psychological struggle over what was actually an aesthetic and ideological contestation between contemporaries.[1]

It also casts into the shadows a decade and more of the period, an era that might be marked off by the publication of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and the release of the first collected works of Lord Byron in 1815, or, to use other markers, by the Peace of Amiens and the Hundred Days. Most simply put, these are the years of the Napoleonic Wars.

When we as Romanticists turn from our own conflicted and confusing world to the literature we study and love, we would rather think of powerful literature than the force of arms, of Keatsian luxuries, Austenian order, Wordsworthian hushed solemnities, of Blake's mental strife not actual combat, of the Cockney culture wars rather than wars of conquest; but a range of scholars, including Betty Bennett and Simon Bainbridge, Mary Favret and Philip Shaw, have reminded us that the Romantic era witnessed a world almost constantly at war.[2] As such scholars have shown us, war is never far from the central works of the Romantic imagination – Wordsworth's beautiful landscapes contain demobilized soldiers, cottages

ruined by a wartime economy, solitaries left despondent by the wars of revolution; Keats's romances are offered against accounts of what he calls in *Endymion* "the death-day of empires" (2.34); Austen's wedding bells sound in a world that also echoes to naval cannonades.

If, somewhat against our will, we do think of Romantic wars, we tend – in keeping with our monumentalizing turn towards the "Big Six," towards big ideas such as the sublime and national identity, towards hot dates such as 1789 or 1819, towards larger than life figures such as Napoleon or Nelson – to reflect on relatively large actions taking place in and around Europe – Austerlitz or Trafalgar or Waterloo. But we need to remember the struggles at the periphery – the War of 1812 in North America, the Russo-Ottoman war, the wars of liberation in South America. Even the battle for Europe was in many ways settled at the margins, in Spain and Russia. These military actions were often quite small. As Patrick O'Brien reminds us in his novels, most naval battles involved a very small number of ships, with engagements often pitting a single vessel such as HMS *Shannon* against a solitary enemy such as the USS *Chesapeake* on June 1, 1813. As Leigh Hunt repeatedly complains, the major British military tool against Napoleon was the "expeditionary force," not a full-scale assault upon the continent but contained actions seeking to achieve particular goals.[3]

Such expeditionary raids might meet cataclysmic ends, as was the case of the Walcheren expedition (discussed at greater length in Chapter 3), which was a relatively large action, involving 40,000 men, but which had the distinctly limited aim of disrupting France's military progress through a feint against the Dutch coast, ultimately aimed at Antwerp. The departure of this expedition was delayed, Napoleon learned of the British plans, and the attack was thwarted. While losses in battle were not that great, the remaining British troops, trapped on Walcheren, fell prey to disease; by the year's end, there were 4,000 dead and 11,000 ill, and the army faced a crisis of confidence at home. Even a successful British expedition, such as the one launched in 1808, with 15,000 men landing in Portugal under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley, could end in disgrace, as the British commanders, after defeating French forces at the Battle of Vimeiro, signed the Convention of Cintra, replacing the French flag with the British rather than Portuguese colors and allowing the French troops to depart on British ships, with many Portuguese national treasures still in possession of the French. While these expeditions involved large numbers, they had restricted aims and even more limited results; they were contained raids on Napoleonic Europe, not a concerted campaign.

Actions elsewhere were smaller: In 1803, Wellington won the battle of Assaye in India – considered by some to be his greatest military feat after Waterloo – with only 4,500 troops against 30,000 Mahrattas, though he did lose one-third of his men. In 1814, 4,500 British troops sacked Washington, DC. Andrew Jackson took Pensacola, FL, with 4,000 regular troops, militia men, and Indians. Battles on the frontiers of the US and Canada often involved only a few hundred men. The Shawnees, who battled for the Ohio valley for decades, never numbered more than 2,500 as a people. The liberators of Chile – San Martin and O'Higgins – fought the Spanish for years with the forces on both sides never exceeding a few thousand. Our period offered global war, but most of the action involved relatively small numbers of people in often far-off places, so far-off they often continued to fight after peace had been declared – we might think of the Battle of New Orleans, settled after peace had been declared at Ghent between the United States and Britain, or of the final action of the Napoleonic Wars, which was not Waterloo but the British assault upon Guadeloupe, which had sided with Napoleon during the 100 Days, where the first of three landings on the island involved 850 Royal York Rangers against 500 French defenders; the French capitulated on August 10, almost a month after Napoleon had surrendered. Even with the 1815 Treaty of Paris structuring a peace for Europe, war, of course, still shadowed the present: to take a few examples, August 27, 1816 saw a European alliance bomb Algiers, the First Seminole and the Third Maratha Wars began in 1817, the Battle of Maipú, a turning point in the Chilean struggle for independence, took place on April 5, 1818, and on August 16, 1819 England witnessed the Peterloo massacre. The era did not see the kind of total war of which the twentieth century made us all too aware, but instead limited expeditions, sallies, and border raids, often accompanied by extended negotiations. This scattered mode of war was more tactical than strategic. It lacked decisive actions, at least until Waterloo, and thus noncombatants in England experienced it at a distance, as Favret argues, with war becoming not so much an existential threat as an ongoing background state of terror.

As the assault on Guadeloupe suggests, there are border dates as well as border lands, times as well as places we tend to overlook. In locating a culture of the border raid, I am proposing that we examine more fully a temporal border land in our period between the two most studied outpourings of creativity, one in the 1790s and the other after Waterloo. I want to examine the culture of the period between these two Romantic moments, roughly the culture produced during the period when the war was clearly against Napoleon rather than revolutionary France, to look at less "hot"

dates such as the Peace of Amiens, the Regency crisis, and Napoleon's first abdication, and to see how certain cultural innovations taken during those years of violence and frustration shaped the writings of Byron, the Shelleys, and Keats: that is, how what we call second-generation Romanticism arises in part as a response not just to the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, or Blake but also to writers such as Thomas Holcroft, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and Leigh Hunt. It is not coincidental that my three writers from these war years are the self-educated son of a shoemaker who became a "Jacobin" novelist and a cosmopolitan playwright, a woman from a prominent family of dissenting intellectuals who taught geography and became a leading voice on issues from slavery to war, and the king of the Cockneys, a transplanted trans-Atlantic writer with roots in North America and the Caribbean. Holcroft, Barbauld, and Hunt both came from outside the national centers of cultural and political power and were connected with a global culture. Their works emerged in a moment of global warfare and reflected upon the movements of global empires. These writers did not look just to some native tradition but to models found in different places and times. Their diverse kinds of borrowing are the subject of this current essay into Romantic culture. I am not interested in either some benign model of cultural tradition or one that focuses on the struggles of individual writers to assimilate that tradition. Remembering that the Romantic era was one of warfare and wanting to resist a monumentalizing turn, I suggest that we should think of the Romantic period – both in its military actions and its cultural productions – as the era of small feints, limited campaigns, border raids. Working below social barriers and beyond national boundaries, these writers created key modes of modern literature, raiding their own and other cultures to create new sociolects, new ways of speaking about themselves and their worlds.

I believe it is important that these experiments appeared during years of realities of war and dreams of peace, and that, in particular, they came at moments when there seemed to be some hope that the war might end and the world be changed: the Peace of Amiens, the Regency Crisis, Napoleon's first abdication – each promised hope, particularly for the parts of the left working to reform the goverment, that the future could be freed from a past of violence and oppression. As each hope was dashed, these cultural experimenters worked to keep hope alive through other means. Through three texts that pursue different kinds of border-crossing cultural work – Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery* taken from the French and performed at Covent Garden in 1802, Barbauld's juvenalian satire *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, and Hunt's *Story of Rimini* based on Dante and written in large

part while he was in prison between 1813 and 1815 – I hope to outline a history of this period that is also an account of cultural border raiding, of the ways in which British culture was always in this period hybridized, international, diversified as is fitting for works born in an era of military and cultural border crossing. While almost any literary text could be described as engaging across cultural boundaries – we need only think of Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton turning to Italy – I want to stress the specificity of these cultural tactics at this moment of war. Cultural exchange in a time of war operates under particular restraints. To take a simple point, the writers I treat could not during the war years travel easily to Paris or Rome for an extended exposure to those cultures but had to raid them, as it were, briefly and from a distant base in England. I am, of course, also suggesting that this type of literary exchange is analogous to the kind of war being conducted at the time, that the forms I take up are appropriate to this particular time of war with its limited expeditions and sallies. Moving from the reality of war's violent incursions to a metaphoric sense of cultural border crossings becomes more than verbal sleight of hand when we recognize the real social and cultural tensions that arise as these authors cross barriers of language, gender, and class.

When we make such an attempt to relate the literature we love to its historical moment, we are still, at this late date, likely to be accused of really hating that literature, of sullying the aesthetic, of reducing poetry to ideology. Critics of historical literary work object that what is often known as the new historicism is based on an assumption that the critic knows more than the poet, that our scholarship arises from a hermeneutics of suspicion, that we work to correct the poets for their ideological errors. I rarely find that to be the case, and particularly not in the work of such key historicists as Jerome McGann or Marjorie Levinson, who clearly celebrate the sheer power of the aesthetic even if they may worry about how that power is wielded. What may be true is that historical work tends first to think of literature as an ideological effect, that there is a tendency to explain as much as possible of the work of art in relation to a context that always precedes as well as includes it; in the end, one may feel that what makes the work unique – usually its form, its beauty but also its imaginative vision – has been explained away. The aesthetic, we are told, has been reduced to the merely political.

There are several points to note here, including the demotion of politics to some lower form of human endeavor, which is certainly in keeping with current ideological positions that want to assert that solutions lie not with the political (i.e. collective governance) but in the "private" sector

(i.e. corporate power). We might also want to query our use of "reductive," which has moved the word from its original sense of bringing back, of recalling, of returning something to its place to the sense of bringing down, diminishing; it is as if the history of the verb "to reduce" tracks the intervention of a sense of a separate aesthetic realm in relation to which the things we value such as art are "diminished" by being "brought back" to the place, the context, from which they came. (We could come at this point from the other end, as it were, by taking up Hegel's essay, "Who Thinks Abstractly?," where he argues that abstraction occurs when something is abstracted or taken from its context.) In any event, for me, politics involves the ways in which people understand themselves when they come together in communities, small and large; that is why politics is not simply what happens in, say, Parliament, it is why there is, for example, a sexual politics, why the personal is the political, why we can speak of a politics of the workplace, of the home, or even of leisure. To say that art is political is, then, not to say it can be "reduced" in the sense of "diminished" to a series of political causes but that it is part of the human community and has communal effects, that it does work in the world. It is important to track the contextual forces that shape a work of art, to return it to the place from which it came: culture is not born full grown from the brow of some poetic Zeus. It is equally important to note that any work of art exceeds those forces in that it in turn gives them shape, provides them with form, helps us understand ourselves, for example, within the realm of the political, in Habermasian terms, the public sphere. Art makes what goes under the unyielding name of the "real" perceptible to the human senses as beautiful and thus as meaningful in human terms. This aesthetic value added does not remove the work of art from politics, but instead converts it from effect to cause. The work of art does work in the world, in the realm of the "real" – and it does so, for example, by enriching my sense of nature that might shape my behaviors, by providing insights into desire that might then be acted upon, or by suggesting if only for a moment that the world can be organized in some way different from the way it is now, as a space for change is imagined. Art, reshaping what shapes it, changes us and through us the world. As the very late Romantic André Breton would have it, "Beauty will be CONVULSIVE or will not be at all."[4] Even the cultural border raid or the artistic feint can wrench us from a savage torpor and perhaps allow us to agitate the world around us.

In taking up the literature of the Napoleonic war years, I am not especially interested in particular writers' reflections on war. In tackling texts that arose at moments of hope and then disappointment for those seeking

reform within England, I am not only intrigued by how texts negotiate those particular moments of excitement and frustration. I am most concerned with the way in which these artists, responding to moments of crisis, created new forms of art that would be deployed time and again and be contested time and again in other moments. In dealing with these moments of crisis, these writers created new, hybridized forms. Friedrich Schiller, in his *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, had argued that modern culture was sentimental, able to offer elegiac evocations of the past and satiric riffs on the present. These writers, turning to past culture and critiquing current dilemmas, drew on both the elegiac and satiric modes, but they added a visionary, experimental mode able to preview the future. Each of these authors can be identified with a central mixed mode of experimental writing that would influence the work of the better known second-generation Romantic writers. Drawing influence from France, Holcroft would introduce the melo- or music-drama to the English stage, to which Byron along with other playwrights would respond. Barbauld, appropriating the tradition of classical satire supposedly barred to her gender, created a new kind of satiric and prophetic jeremiad also used by the Shelleys. Reopening English poetry to Italian culture, Hunt experimented with a mode of erotic and visionary romance that would influence the writings of Keats and the other Cockneys. Out of particular historical moments, each created new forms that continue to resonate. In tracing these forms, I hope as well to show how what we call second-generation Romanticism could move out from the most conservative response to this moment, the melodrama, through the most unsettled and unsettling response, that of satirical prophecy, to their most radical and utopian works offered in the form of eroticized romance.

Before turning to those writers and their cultural legacies, however, I want to begin in the middle of these middle Romantic years, in 1809, where we can find a guide to this era of border wars and cultural border raids. It was in that year, on July 2, that the consummate border crosser and cultural pirate, George Gordon, Lord Byron, who would himself be pirated across the lines of language, class, gender, and genre, set out on that most eccentric and most famous of grand tours, his circumnavigation of Napoleonic Europe that led him to the border sites of Portugal and Cintra, to Gibraltar aboard the frigate *Hyperion*, to Malta with John Galt, to Albania and Greece, and on to Constantinople and the Troad, about which he contemplated a third canto of his new poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.[5] This path was in many ways that of least resistance: with the heart of Europe closed to travel and trade, Britain's commerce was steadily

increasing with southern Europe and the Mediterranean, so Byron in a sense followed British capital; and in January of 1809, England had negotiated a peace with the Ottomans, opening the Levant to adventurous wanderers. As he traveled through scenes recalled in Greek myth and literature, Byron clearly responded to spots that evoked classical times, as when he climbed the Symplegades, rocks at the entrance to the Bosporus from the Black Sea that appear as the Clashing Rocks in the story of the Argonauts; he tells us that he translated the opening of *Medea* at the top of the rocks, with a "sublime passage" in his head, that he opens with the doggerel couplet, "Oh how I wish that an embargo / Had kept in port the good ship Argo" (*BLJ*, vol. 1, pp. 245–6). Even here, the tactics of war – an embargo – enter into his recollection of the ancient past; in this light, it is fitting that the military frigate that carried Hobhouse and Byron to Smyrna was the *Pylades,* named for Orestes' faithful friend. His journeys, examined most often for what they tell us about Byron's first long poem, were conducted most often under military escort, as he sailed on the military brig *Spider* or rode with Ali Pasha's troops; when visiting, say, Robert Adair, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, Byron would wear his regimentals. He would certainly hear of real military and cultural raids, of the British victories under Admiral Collingwood in 1809 in the Ionian Islands along the shore of Albania, and of Lord Elgin's seizure and exporting of the Parthenon marbles, about which he would write scathingly in *Childe Harold* and *The Curse of Minerva*. Byron himself was almost seized by real pirates, and a ship with his letters and Hobhouse's manuscripts was taken off Algiers (*BLJ*, vol. 2, p. 26).

Byron's journeying went no further than Athens and Constantinople (where he met the diplomat and would-be poet Stratford Canning and where the Byronic Lord Raymond in Mary Shelley's *Last Man* would die by plague while fighting for Greece), but we might imagine him voyaging on. Living in Athens in February 1811, Byron writes Hobhouse, from whom he had been recently separated, that "My firman for Syria & AEgypt being arrived I am off in Spring for Mount Sion, Damascus, Tyre & Sidon, Cairo & Thebes" (*BLJ*, vol. 2, p. 39). In other words, he had a passport to travel in the Ottoman Middle East. At the same time, he writes John Hanson, "I shall not return to England before I have visited Jerusalem & Grand Cairo" (*BLJ*, vol. 2, pp. 38–9). He never took this trip, but he might have. In a sense, barred from visiting Paris and Rome, the cultural capitals of turn of the century Europe, he sought to visit the capitals of older cultures, the centers of Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thought. Traveling within the confines of the Eastern Mediterranean, he could, in a sense, revisit the history of Western culture.

We can imagine him beginning by traveling from Greece to Jerusalem, from the Hellenic to the Hebraic, landing as most visitors did by boat at Jaffa and then traveling overland. This is how Chateaubriand entered Palestine in 1806, noting that galley boats brought pilgrims in from their ships and then Arabs waded out to carry visitors the last few feet through the water into the port of Jaffa, "a miserable assemblage of houses huddled together, and built in the form of an amphitheatre, on the declivity of a lofty hill."[6] Byron, like Chateaubriand, might have then ridden on, perhaps looking out into the landscape for the wild gazelle on Judah's hills, before reaching Jerusalem, at the time a completely walled city with its gates closed from sundown to sunrise to protect the inhabitants from marauding Bedouins. He most likely would have entered through the Jaffa Gate, also known as the Pilgrims' Gate, paying the tribute to pass into the town. The gate was framed by some of the city's most famous architecture, the City Wall, built by Suleiman the Magnificent, and the "Citadel of David." Within the walls, Byron would have found a small city of about 200 acres with a population under 10,000. The city, while a holy site to three major religions and under the protection of the Ottoman Sultan, was not important in any economic or military way; when Napoleon invaded the country in 1799, for example, he besieged Acre but did not even visit Jerusalem.

There was no British or any other European consulate in the city at the time, the nearest British offices being in Jaffa and Haifa. While he might have preferred help from a young woman who "walks in beauty like the night," Byron could have turned to the Roman Catholic population, around 800, who were largely of Arab descent, converts from the days of the Crusades. The community was centered around the Franciscan convent of St. Savior, where there were some Portuguese monks; the father superior was Italian and the procurator was a Spaniard. There were few pilgrims at this period, so Byron would have been welcomed. Just as he lived at the Capuchin monastery in Athens, he could have stayed with the Franciscans, as had the explorer and naturalist Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, who was in Jerusalem in 1806 before traveling on into Arabia, including a trip to Mecca, where he converted to Islam; he was reportedly poisoned in September 1811 by the imam of Sana'a, the capital of Yemen and one of the oldest continuously occupied cities in the world. Chateaubriand reports that travelers bearing a firman, such as Byron would have had, were particularly welcome, as he would be seen as moving under the protection of the Ottoman Empire, a protection that might be extended to his Christian hosts, often subject to extortion from the local pasha.[7]

Jerusalem surprised many visitors by its poverty, offering a mix of open ground and warrens of unpaved, narrow streets; it was, as Lamartine would put it, a place "of little miserable houses, and of some uncultivated gardens, whose walls of enclosure had fallen to decay. . . . Its streets are obstructed with rubbish . . . The most miserable hamlet of the Alps or the Pyrenees . . . exhibits more cleanliness, luxury, and even elegance, than the desolate streets of the Queen of Cities."[8] Still, there certainly were sights to see amidst the poverty, with the domes over most houses being much admired. One could see the more famous Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque, though many other familiar buildings were not built until later in the century. The Temple Mount was largely as it is today, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre complex, of course, already existed. This was the most often visited and described sight by Christian pilgrims. It had been damaged by fire in 1808 (Chateaubriand makes the rather exaggerated claim that it "was totally destroyed . . . I am, I may say, the last traveler by whom it was visited, and for the same reason, I shall be its last historian"[9]), so Byron would have seen the reconstruction efforts, guided by the Greek Orthodox community, with aid from Russia. He would have entered an open court in front of the Church, where he could have viewed the façade, while fending off vendors of souvenirs and wondering if the Wandering Jew would make his once-in-a-century visit to beg admission to the Church.[10] He could have entered only with permission of the Turkish guards, who charged admission (as Chateaubriand puts it, you "paid Mahomet for the right to adore Jesus Christ"[11]); within, he would have visited the Stone of Anointing, the chapel of Golgotha, the Chapel of St. Helena, and the Chapel of the Holy Cross; the central spot within the complex was the Greek Orthodox Katholikon, supposedly the center of the earth, and the Holy Sepulchre itself. As Lamartine notes, "Calvary, the Tomb, and several other sites of the drama of Redemption, are united under the roof of a single edifice."[12]

Like Chateaubriand, Byron could have walked along the Via Dolorosa. He would have seen what was called Pilate's Palace, the residence of the Turkish governor and essentially an army camp. He could have viewed the ruins of Solomon's Temple, the house of Lazarus, and finally Calvary. A guide might have taken Byron through the city, as one did Lamartine, decades later, who, pointing out "a dilapidated Turkish house, an old rotten wooden door, or the ruins of a Moorish window, would observe: – that is the house of Veronica; that is the gate of the Wandering Jew; or the window of the Judgment Hall: words which could make only a painful impression on our minds, belied as they were by the evidently modern appearance of the objects, and the manifest improbability of these arbitrary designations."[13]