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## New Directions in Transatlantic Romanticisms

Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange

Inscribed on the grave of Percy Shelley, these lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* evoke not only the tragic event of Shelley's death by drowning, but also his radical desire to transform the world. Shelley dared to envision futures that have never been realized, and these lines evoke the transformations he believed in: ones driven by principles of justice, equality, and truly universal freedoms. What the politics of his poetics could mean for the transatlantic world is best expressed in the words of the late Richard Gravil: 'Shelley's wild west wind, destroyer and preserver, sweeping across the Atlantic [...] shattering the reflections of imperial villas [...] charioting the seeds to their wintry beds, where they await the apocalyptic trump of renewal, blowing up the faint sparks of liberty, promising the long-awaited conflagration' (Gravil 2000: 32). Shelley's principles are part of what makes Romantic literatures politically necessary; they do not, however, account for the (mis)uses of these literatures in actual world politics. Almost from the start, British Romanticism as a discrete field of knowledge within the larger academic construction of 'English literature' has been used to subjugate and to control. As Gauri Viswanathan has taught us, long before they were part of elite school and university curricula, Romantic texts were tools of the imperial mission to 'civilize' colonized peoples. While transatlantic

literary studies in general have attended to the Eurocentric history of the discipline of English, transatlantic studies of Romantic literatures have been slower to account for the role played by these literatures in perpetuating cultural logics of exploitation and exclusion. This is largely due to the fact that the very category of ‘Romanticism’ is a part of that imperialist inheritance, which we in the western academy continue to perpetuate, even amid calls to pluralize or expand it.

Leading the field’s reorientation away from Romanticisms grounded in Eurocentric national identities, Paul Youngquist and Fran Bokin have called for a turn to ‘Black Romanticism’ that emerges from ‘the circulation of people, ideas, and things throughout the Atlantic’ (Youngquist and Botkin 2011: 11 of 30 paras). Following the logic of Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, black Romanticisms are more centrally informed by the complex power differentials and interplays of Afro-Diasporic and European literary, cultural, musical, and oral traditions on the Atlantic rim. Such mapping shifts the focus from being solely on England to the Atlantic as one quadrant on a global graph. Crucially, in this formulation, the word ‘black’ modifies ‘Romanticism(s)’ differently than national epithets like ‘British’ or ‘American’ had done. ‘Black’ here signals not (only) peoples and cultures of the African Diaspora but the cultural logics that produce ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’ as racial categories in the first place. This application is rooted in the fact that ‘Africa and its diaspora are much older than blackness. Blackness does not come from Africa. Rather, Africa and its diaspora become black at a particular stage of their history’ (Wagner 2009: 1–2).<sup>1</sup> An antithesis to the ontological categories and epistemological frames of so-called modernity, ‘blackness’ is understood as a constitutive element of the story of ‘the west,’ and by extension, a core—if still largely under-acknowledged—aspect of historically white constructs such as Romanticism.

But if adding ‘black’ to ‘Romanticism’ enables us to trouble its racist roots, is it still Romanticism? There is a strong argument to be made that Romanticism, as a category of English literary study, is fundamentally incoherent outside of a very specifically classed, raced, and gendered western context. And though it’s true that it has traveled far, it has not necessarily traveled well. If we already know that Romanticism with a capital R, academic Romanticism, has long been wielded as an ideological tool of imperialist white supremacist capitalist hete-

ro-patriarchal thought structures and institutions, why hold on to the term?<sup>2</sup> As twenty-first century scholars, we bear responsibility not to reproduce the epistemological sins of our forefathers; that is, not to subordinate women and men of color, white women, and white men working in alternative modes and styles to an elite European canon that evolved as such with the express aim of ‘cultivating’ colonial subjects, the poor, and white women. Yet such subordination is often precisely the unintended result of efforts to enlarge conventional literary categories like Romanticism. This is not to detract from the vital work of interrogating why and how some perspectives have been elevated and others erased from cultural memory. However, there’s a limit to where that approach can take us because it is ultimately rooted in a positivist relationship to institutions of cultural preservation—it looks for what is already there to be found, but it offers no way to account for what has not been preserved or maintained. Rethinking what we mean by romanticism itself—and here we mean lowercase-r romanticism, the concept (or concepts) beneath the category—is one way into those gaps.

### **(Romantic) Poetry in Moten: Oppositions & Appositions**

Fred Moten highlights a productive tension between the Enlightenment’s equivocation of blackness with what we now think of as ‘race’ and what he implies is a kind of blackness inherent in texts some of us have called capital-r Romantic. For Moten, to realize blackness as a structural position requires ‘a disruption of the regulative methodological hegemony of understanding. Indeed, what if regulative, regulated understanding is that indelibly modern institution that responds to a condition that not only precedes it but also calls it into existence?’ (Moten 2018: 20). Moten asks that we regard blackness as called into existence through its erasure or refusal by, among other forces, the European academic establishment of the early nineteenth century. Such apprehension requires that we disrupt the ‘methodological hegemony of understanding’ and embrace, instead, the possibilities opened by way of the (fugitive) imagination. Notably, Moten chooses the word ‘romanticism’ to describe challenges posed by the black radical tradition (the focus of his inquiry) to the regulatory discourses of European aesthetics: ‘the romanticism of the black radical tradition is...

played out in the sensual, nonsensical depths of surface, on the plain of imagination in black performance' (Ibid.: 31). In pulling the term into conversation with black radicalism, Moten writes it with a lowercase *r*, implying a rejection of capital-*r* Romanticism's privileged place within an imperialist intellectual history. But there's also an invitation here to rethink the extent to which even that canon's romanticism was ever really contained by the capital *R* in the first place. That is, if romanticism is, at least in part, a mode of thought that takes seriously that which exceeds the purely or conventionally rational, then at stake in bringing 'race' to the center of Romantic literary studies is none other than romanticism itself.

Beyond simply enlarging a category that we already know is rooted in white supremacist structures of thought and feeling, the authors in this volume demonstrate how engaging with anti-colonial and anti-racist critical methods can lead us to ask philosophically and politically urgent questions that frame the field anew. As Marlon Ross emphasized almost a decade ago, scholarship in Romanticism has tended to eschew such methods. Even today, if they are invoked at all, it is within the relatively isolated purview of scholarship on slavery and colonialism. But as Moten demonstrates, centering 'race' beyond the obvious places opens previously unacknowledged dimensions of Romantic-era thought:

"Race" in Kant is incantatory gesture, the mark of an incapacity that drives philosophy (the black can't of philosophy, philosophy's unpayable debt to the unmeaning jargon and illegitimate rhetoric, the phono-material suasion it keeps trying to leave behind). The proper valuation of that gesture is made available to us by inhabiting what Kant devalued ... and by considering what even Kant couldn't imagine, namely the beautiful art of what is supposed to be unbeautiful .... What I am imagining, in other words, is a kind of black genius in Kant that must be conserved—an incantatory, ante-Kantian frenzy, a tumultuous derangement, wherein a terrible reality is lent to song and word in their interanimation. (Moten 2018: 32)

In Moten's poetic prose, concepts and identities manifest multivalently, and in this way, Moten's linguistic play emerges as a critical mode and

in and of itself, a critique of the binaries on which racism relies. One of the main polyvalent identities manifesting in Moten is Kant. Moten discusses Kant and blackness as opposites, and then pivots (from Derrida-based opposition of blackness as completing Kant's theory and being present in it) towards apposition in his creation of 'Black Kant'. In basing a theory of blackness on a racist philosopher, Moten makes a multivalent move: it is rhetorical and ethical, exhibiting a generosity of spirit by inviting in and communing with the very thoughts and thinker(s) who would seek to exclude him. Thus, when he cites Kant, he creates a site for community, a venue for diverse thinkers to congregate. He views Kant, Marx, David Kazanjian and others as 'a brilliantly experimental band with which I have here been trying to jam' (Ibid.: 82).

In this musical context, 'jammin' recalls the sense of community in improvisation and dance as well as the eponymous Bob Marley song. This special issue proceeds in the spirit of (the) poetry in Moten, gathering the articles that follow into a quire, even as we inquire into romanticism and 'what it is to acquire, a choir is set to work.' (Moten 2018: ix). It's a reminder that in a choir (or jam session) every instrument and voice can layer into chords of unity, and even a solo is a group effort. In the musical principle behind, say, the voicing of a 7th chord, it is actually the discordant note that makes the harmony distinct, and so it is with the Motenian concept of Black Kant:

What if the ones who are so ugly that their utterances must be stupid are never far from Kant's mature and critical thoughts? What if they, or something they are said and made to bear alone, are the fantastical generation of these thoughts? [...] It is as if that darkness, which gives and takes away the given in and as differentiation without beginning or end, could only be contained if it were yoked to a set of phenotypical particularities whose arbitrary collection and categorization were shamefully deployed by the one whose theorization of how to know better should have allowed and required him to know better. [...] Kant's imaginative deployment of the knowledge of race, the justification of racialized power and the sciences of man. The author of the critical philosophy and the founder of the aesthetico-scientific concept of race that guarantees and endangers

that philosophy's systematicity, is Black Kant. (Ibid.: 2–5).

Moten argues that Kant's very attempt to limit blackness to 'phenotypical particularities', is a tacit acknowledgement that it extends beyond them and is, therefore, transcendental. If Kant's theories exist in contradistinction to blackness, then (with a tip of the hat to Derrida's deconstruction, Moten argues that) they cannot exist without blackness and are therefore dependent and founded upon it. But rather than solely existing in opposition to Kant, they exist in *apposition* to the philosopher, the 'black genius in Kant' that yields an entity Moten calls 'Black Kant,' which exceeds, even as it exists as a function of, the racist philosophies of Kant, himself. Moten opens the way for Black Transcendentalisms: in apposition to the transcendent philosophies, theologies, and poetics of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Amos Bronson Alcott are the comparatively unsung Massachusetts-based transcendentalisms of Phillis Wheatley and Prince Hall. What, then, might be said of the black genius in Shelley? The black genius in Keats? A great deal of Romantic poetry already bears some ante- (anti-?) Kantian investments in its emphasis on the primacy of the imagination. Thinking about these investments in terms of the era's racializing logics demands that we re-examine how lowercase-r romanticism, a mode of thought that bears, perhaps, some spiritual affinity with politically subversive intellectual traditions such as black radicalism, is ossified in capital-r Romanticism's elite white male literary canon.

Moten's 'differentiation without beginning or end' is the alpha and omega of blackness's apposition and opposition, respectively. The 'differentiation' is an allusion to *differance*: blackness's being without end is (endlessly) deferred and differentiated. Just as Moten answers Derrida's opposition with apposition, so, too, does he respond to Derrida's call of endless deferral with endless referral, (an unk)no(wable) beginning to his (unk)no(wable) end. Thus, Moten writes in a call-and-response relation to Kant. And part of the endless referral is that there are always new thinkers (members of the band) appearing onstage to whom Moten is responding. In *Stolen Life*, a collection of essays that is part of a trilogy aptly called *consent not to be a single being*, what appears as Moten's dialogue with Immanuel Kant is, in fact, a dialogue with Winfried Menninghaus's Kant; then the dialogue is with Henry Pickford's translation of Menninghaus's Kant; and then with Robert

Bernasconi's Kant, who is joined by many others—Denise Ferreira da Silva, Achille Mbembe, David Kazanjian, etc.:

My concern with Kant and with the claims of blackness in Kant, moves by way of Menninghaus whose work has been, for me, a kind of rebeginning. Of course I deviate from that rebeginning from the beginning. This deviation is, in part, a function of Pickford's translations of Menninghaus's interpellations of Kant. More deviance [...] follows (Ibid.: 269)

Our start is but a rebeginning and a remembering that is already deviating from the beginning. Kant, then, is not the unmoved mover: there are endless (and beginningless) antecedents who (cor)respond to the philosophical(l of) *BlacKant*. In trading fours with canonical philosophers, European and European American present-day critics, and scholars of color writing about critical race theory, Moten creates a band whose multiplicity stands in a/opposition to Kant's attempt to segregate black and white philosophically, racially, and hierarchically. In this way, Moten calls on us to understand the pluralities within romanticism as well as Romanticism, a necessary reckoning that cannot happen unless we rethink the way we understand literary and cultural influence. This special issue continues Richard Gravil's notions of 'Romantic Dialogues', opening up new conversations: interdisciplinary interplay among international interlocutors of Atlantic romanticisms.

### **Apposing Anxiety of Influence with Complicities of Confluence: Calls and Responses**

The idea of endless referents and antecedents to Romanticism opens up a call and response among the big six Romantics and those who preceded them as well as with their contemporaries who were previously excluded by the canon, such as we'll see in this issue through readings of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, Francisco de Miranda, and others. The notion of endless deferral of the end of the Romantic period brings later responses, too, such as Countee Cullen's 'To John Keats, Poet. At Spring Time.' Moten gives us a theoretical principle to discuss this Harlem Renaissance poet's love letter to Keats across borders of nation, time, space, sexuality, and race. Cullen redefines Romanticism in this poem in finding community with Keats and seeing his own

queerness and blackness reflected in Keats's poetry. Cullen's *BlacKeats* anticipates Moten's *BlacKant*. The radical and revolutionary Keats that Cullen brings to light was not discussed by Romanticists until Nick Roe's work brought this side of the poet to scholarly attention in the late twentieth century. Cullen's Keats exists in apposition to the depoliticized, aestheticized Keats being sketched by the pens of T. S. Eliot and others.

Scholars of Romanticism have not had a framework to discuss this poem, so for nearly a century it has been dismissed as an imitation of Keats. For entirely too long, studies of Romanticism were dominated by models of influence. The problem with influence studies, as Susan Manning has pointed out, is that it is based in hierarchy. For instance, Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* posits that there is an inferior poet who follows a superior, more well-established poet in the hopes that the younger poet may someday veer off in a new direction, where the reigning poet's metrical feet have yet to tread. When such a model is applied to writers of color, hierarchies of influence are often blurred with those of race to the detriment of the authors and their work. When another model is considered, such as the call and response of the jazz musicians in Harlem and Paris of the 1920s, the possibility exists for Keats and Cullen to be trading fours across syncopated oceans of time and space. Indeed, as Wynton Marsalis points out, jazz originates from the combination of Anglo-Irish folk songs and Afro-Caribbean rhythms and melodies to create music that is inextricably linked to (but ultimately not limited by) the power differentials it subverts. Interpreting Cullen's 'To John Keats, Poet. At Springtime' in the context of both the jazz age it grew out of and Moten's work on Kant as a model allows us to see Cullen as an equal to Keats who responds to him with a new style of poetry that seamlessly blends the radicalism of the Harlem Renaissance with r/Romanticisms of the Haitian, French, and American Revolutions to protest racism. Cullen defies segregation and essentialism in his very subject matter by combining the Afrocentrism of Harlem's poetics with the Anglocentrism of Keats. In yoking such seeming opposites Cullen requires his readers then and now to grapple with how inextricably aesthetics are linked to race and how and why 'white' genres and artists continue to be valued above 'black' ones. The near century-long tradition of reading this poem as an inferior copy of Keats that ignores the



politics of African American poetics is, ironically and unfortunately, the greatest proof of Cullen's point.

Cullen, then, is one of the beginnings. Another is Moten's response to race and aesthetics:

At the beginning of *In Praise of Nonsense: Kant and Bluebeard*, Winfried Menninghaus calls our attention to an exemplary expression of sovereignty's ambivalence toward its own non-fullness. "All the richness of the imagination', [Immanuel] Kant cautions in the *Critique of Judgment*, 'in its lawless freedom produces nothing but nonsense'. Nonsense, then, does not befall the imagination like a foreign pathogen; rather, it is the very law of imagination's own lawlessness'. Kant therefore prescribes a rigid antidote: even in the field of the aesthetic, understanding must 'severely clip the wings' of imagination and 'sacrifice ... some' of it" (Moten 2018: 1)

Moten begins *in medias res* to mediate race in Kant, who deploys it as a regulative principle (Ibid.: 2). Concomitant with Kant's attempt to police race is blackness's refusal and resistance to this regulation (Ibid.: 3). The imagination's hyper-productivity produces nonsense (excess), its own built-in rebellion to its attempt to regulate itself. Blackness is the excess that Kant can't curtail; it is the romantic response to the Enlightenment, *the Endarkenment*:

The poetics of nonsense arises [...] in the border area between late Enlightenment and early romanticism. In Michel Foucault's sense, this poetics can be read as one of the diverse "points of resistance" that are "present everywhere in the new power network", as countermovements that do not simply exist outside the new sense-paradigm, and yet are not merely its parasitic "underside". (Ibid.: 4)

If romanticism, then, is one of the central coordinates of black rebellion that Paul Gilroy and Moten map, this special issue plots other 'points of resistance' on axes that often intersect with canonical ones, multivalent points forming constellations and cartographies crossing in trajectories moving in multiple, new directions in transatlantic romanticisms.

The essays that follow consider not only what is received from Europe and North America, but also how cultures typically overlooked by Anglo-American studies of Romantic literatures respond to and

challenge these ideas. Bringing to light connections not only within the Black Atlantic, but also between Europe and the Global South more broadly, in the aggregate, the essays that follow showcase what Romanticism, as a field of study, might look like if it were rooted in something akin to Lisa Lowe's notion of the 'intimacies of four continents'— 'the circuits, connections, associations, and mixings of differently laboring peoples [including enslaved Africans, peoples of indigenous descent, and colonized laborers], eclipsed by the operations that universalize the Anglo-American liberal individual.' (Lowe 2015: 21). These eclipses are indisputably part of Romanticism's legacy, and it is incumbent on all of us working in the field to reckon seriously with that fact. Yet as the essays in this issue demonstrate, such reckoning does not simply do away with knowledges we have inherited, but marks 'a sea-change into something rich and strange.' Thus, even as they acknowledge canonical writers' central place in imperialist white supremacist capitalist hetero-patriarchal cultural histories and traditions, the authors in this special issue reframe Romantic-era literatures as sites of refusal.

Atesede Makonnen's "'The Actual Sight of the Thing": Blackness and the White Gaze in Early Nineteenth Century British Literature' considers how contemporary scripts of the visibility of race were written at a decisive moment at the turn of the nineteenth century, just after the Haitian Revolution in 1804 and Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807. Makonnen traces how British society transitioned from seeing enslaved Africans as sympathetic or pitiable figures to, instead, looking at free black bodies as threats to established hierarchies and national integrity. This shift, she argues, 'was especially marked by the anxiety of potential miscegenation, leading to a focus on tutoring the white female gaze so as to instill a basic understanding of racial difference that established blackness as untouchably inferior.' Through readings of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, William Godwin's 'Washing the Blackamoor White' and Charles Lamb's essays and *Tales of Shakespeare*, Makonnen shows how British Romantic-era writers used literary and visual texts to train a 'white gaze' that informs anti-black thinking even today. Drawing connections between nineteenth-century British texts and widely circulated and discussed expressions of anti-blackness in our globalized and networked contemporary moment, Makonnen's article is not only international, but also interdisciplinary.

Such a combination is axiomatic in new work in transnational romanticisms. Without sacrificing historical specificity, it takes seriously reverberations of Romantic-era thought in our own time.

Moving beyond works generated in Europe, César Soto's 'Mexico in the Revolutionary Atlantic: Catholicism and the Arts of Resistance in Fray Servando's *Carta de un Americano al Español* and *Memorias*' shows how the writings of Dominican friar Fray Servando Teresa de Mier worked to subvert dominant modes of political and religious authority in order to open anti-colonial discourses in Spanish America. Soto's essay revises transnational approaches to Romanticism, which he argues continue to ignore the Global South, by 'cross[ing] the Atlantic to consider how Spanish Americans designed and carried out their own revolutionary plans.' In situating its revolutionary discourses within a southern Atlantic rather than a French or North American frame, Soto substantially enlarges our understanding of the era's political radicalism. In so doing, he contributes to scholarly conversations in literature as well as theology by analyzing Mier's radical religious rhetoric as being in apposition to the Paine-Burke debate and the Great Awakening. It is part of a greater awakening: a radical liberation theology that has links to Black Atlantic abolitionist theologies and anticipates the twentieth-century movement started by another Dominican, Gustavo Gutiérrez. Soto examines an important moment—ever-present in Wheatley, Equiano, and many others—when the religion of the colonizer is remixed with indigenous beliefs and wielded as an anti-colonial technology. Religious syncretism placed in conversation with Homi K. Bhabha's notion of 'cultural hybridity' and other postcolonial and critical race theories offer frameworks to discuss subversive elements. As in Makonnen's essay, the complexity of international and interdisciplinary connections foster and necessitate collaboration, through which Soto calls for more focus on the Americas as well as theology in reading radical revolutionary resistance manifesting through religious rhetoric.

Omar Miranda's essay, a companion piece of sorts to Soto's, likewise adds to scholarly conversations and positions in the crucial, groundbreaking work of Joselyn Almeida and Cole Heinowitz. Spearheaded by the celebrity cachet of Francisco de Miranda and Lord Byron, Omar Miranda considers how the journals *El Colombiano* and

*The Liberal* ‘redirected Mirandist and Byronic spheres of influence in the service of their respective revolutionary causes.’ Owing in part to the fact that they were produced while the celebrity figures at their helms were in exile, Miranda reads these journals as efforts to mobilize communities in ways ‘that transcend cultural particularity’ in order to ‘realize new transnational relations.’ The unprecedented juxtaposition and apposition of these journals adds to our understanding of transnational print culture as well as conversations about Miranda and Byron, including Miranda as a Motenian antecedent to the Byronic hero and celebrity. This article also makes the important claim that the way Miranda and Byron sought to push the limits of liberal individualism provides a model that scholars can emulate to help redefine the field. The article has an important antecedent in Said’s idea of nation and exile as existing contrapuntally to each other and adds to his examination of poetry and novels by bringing exilic journals or periodicals into the discussion. Said draws on Adorno’s belief that the only home available (for exiles) is in writing, an idea exemplified by both journals as well as Miranda’s notion of his London house as a fixed point for independence and liberty. There are also metonymic and synecdochic ways in which Miranda’s journal and books in his libraries are ‘points of resistance’—the shared and emancipated, independent homes for a readership fighting colonial rule.

Matthew Scott’s essay traces out an oppositional and appositional dyad that is present in one of the essential topics of the Romantic imaginary. Taking a cue from Adorno that has congruities with Menninghaus’s reformulation of Kantian aesthetics, he aims to demonstrate the frequent proximity of accounts of the sublime to the affect of its apparent opposite: bathos or sinking. The essay reaches back to the eighteenth century but takes as its central subject the reception of Lord Byron amid the *longue durée* of nineteenth-century American literary and visual culture. It forms part of a wider project, already explored in other published writings, that seeks to demonstrate that Romantic cultural theory was always productively confused about the very critical categories that appeared superficially to undergird it. The ‘Byron’ that emerges is a slippery construct, which consistently undermines the political ends to which his later reputation is put, but the essay suggests that this makes him rather exemplary of acts of appropriation within the

postcolonial context.

In 'Feeling Black, Feeling Back: Race, Fragility, and Romanticism,' Bakary Diaby examines 'the interplay between racialization and feeling.' This is a crucial and long-overdue intervention in a field largely organized around the epistemological efficacy of emotion and sensation. Diaby engages Robin DiAngelo's concept of white fragility—the negative affective responses commonly exhibited by white people who experience discomfort when confronted with conversations about race and the fact of racism—to revise dominant assumptions about who 'counts' as a Romantic subject and why. By contrasting how racism undergirds the 'moods' of Romanticism against perceptions of the black body as impervious to pain, Diaby considers whose pain has been made to matter—both then and now. By thus raising 'the still-felt ramifications of two intertwined histories: that of whiteness and its fragility on the one hand and the perception of the Black body as resistant to pain on the other,' Diaby calls the field's grounding epistemologies into question. Raising the problem of white fragility as evinced by Romantic-era authors, Diaby's essay is also a call to present-day scholars who write about these authors to take stock of our own inherited assumptions about a long-whitewashed literary past.

Though they proceed in radically different ways, the essays in this special issue all grapple with a central question: how do we (all of us) pivot Romanticism toward more capacious transnational romanticisms? This question is also at the heart of the Bigger Six Collective, a group of scholars whose work on Romantic literatures departs from the understanding that the field's dominant emphasis on white authors situated in 'the west' cannot be disarticulated from (among others) structural blackness and brownness, the African diaspora, and/or cultures of the so-called Global South. Sharing ideas as well as a sense of community and urgency around the necessity of expanding beyond the six canonical poets (Blake, Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth), the Collective brings anti-racist and anti-colonial critical methods to bear on Romanticism. This volume concludes with a statement from the Bigger Six Collective that centers communality as praxis in relation to a field that has given us the lasting idea of the Romantic genius working in *his* solitary chamber to produce greatness. The notion of solitude and community are, of course, not mutually exclusive.

It is possible, after all, to experience communion and community with a writer you've never met, whose words you're reading, alone. Likewise, an academic fellowship implies joining a society, or enjoying fellowship. This notion describes the spirit of collaboration behind this issue, and also the feeling of solidarity among the authors of the essays as well as the communities of thinkers whose names appear in each article's bibliography.

This special issue joins a growing movement to destabilize the Eurocentric perspectives from which Anglo-American Romanticisms continue to be read. In concert with recent and forthcoming work by Manu Samriti Chander, Nikki Hessell, Jared Hickman, Patricia A. Matthew, Matt Sandler, Rebecca Schneider, and others, the essays that follow read the global circulation of texts and authors (many of which we in the Anglophone 'west' inherit as canonical) through perspectives that call our intellectual foundations into question. These probes and transformations—we might even call them revolutions—are realized at the level of method as well as content. What's more, they maintain as central the question of reciprocity: what, if anything, does the academic study of Romanticism offer—and what does it owe—to those thinkers whom it has excluded or overlooked?

This, then, raises another question: to what extent are the possibilities opened by such challenges discernable in the conditions within and against which scholarly work has traditionally been produced, such as modes of assessment used by dissertation and tenure committees? Recognizing, especially, that the crisis of precarity has created new norms of academic knowledge production, we stress the urgency of community as opposition and apposition to the increasingly unsustainable model of solitary scholarly production. Advancing the field of Romantic literary studies in new directions is necessarily a collective effort, one that we hope manifests in fellowship, friendship, and collegiality, but which demands honest and rigorous reckoning with what we have been and what we hope to become. In that spirit, the contributors to this issue as well as its guest editors and the Editorial Board of *Symbiosis* put forward this invitation to you to jam with us.

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## Notes

1. It is worth reiterating here what differentiates blackness as an analytical framework from the cultural signifier, sometimes marked by capitalization, Blackness: '[t]he implication here is not just that blackness and black culture are not the same; what is further and more importantly implied is that blackness and black people are not the same, however much it is without doubt the case that black people have a privileged relation to blackness, that black cultures are (under)privileged fields for the transformational expression and enactment of blackness' (Moten 2018: 18).

2. We borrow the construction 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist hetero-patriarchy' from bell hooks, who uses variations of it throughout her body of work to make visible the continually interlocking systems of subjugation that buttress western modernity. While the essays in this special issue focus most explicitly on elements of imperialism and racism, we employ her full formulation in our introduction as a reminder that these systems are inseparable from one another, and that to evoke one is necessarily to evoke them all.

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