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Lost and Found in Translation: Romanticism and the Legacies of Jacques Derrida

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# Lost and Found in Translation: Romanticism and the Legacies of Jacques Derrida

IT IS A CURIOUS IRONY THAT JACQUES DERRIDA RARELY SPOKE OF ROMANTICISM, or of a certain “romanticism,” yet the example of his thinking, teaching, and writing profoundly shaped and continues unpredictably to inflect whatever it is that we know or think we know by that volatile term. To be sure, the instability of “romanticism”—as a fickle catachresis for something that cannot quite be named and so is interminably involved in the process of being named—did not originate with Derrida’s unique intervention in the humanities, but its active afterlife in the academic post-modern was ensured and made more productively convoluted because of it. In ways small and large Derrida demonstrated an uncommon generosity towards colleagues in the field, and this would include the unasked for gift of his thought, yet he happened not to make romanticism a thematic focus of his work, at least not one that he described as such. Several contributors to this volume make this point, but each exemplifies what it nevertheless means to write in the midst of a still unfolding inheritance while at the same time making the obscurities and challenges of that inheritance a part and indeed an important part of his or her work. As Derrida argued, the work *on* mourning and the work *of* mourning are always intertwined in consequential, troublesome, and responsabilizing ways that make being a legatee and a survivor both impossible and unavoidable. The futurity of the future of thinking and of making an intervention in a field of thought rests on our negotiations with the past (including a rigorous critique of the claims made in the name of the pastness of the past, and of the periodization that appears to ensure its difference from the present), whose already-thereness and thus eternal return makes it feel not like a distant memory, like “one of those speculative statements of a German Idealism that we would today study through the mists like some great philosophical archive,”<sup>1</sup> as Derrida says ironically of Friedrich Schelling (in an essay to

1. Jacques Derrida, “Theology of Translation,” *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, trans. Jan Plug & others (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004) 78. Hereafter cited as “Theology.”

which we will have recourse in a moment), but something much more pressing and urgent, like what is coming or what is to come—yet another lesson that he taught romanticism and that romanticism in turn continues to teach us. The seemingly one-sided conversation that obtains between “Derrida” and “romanticism” thus stages and anticipates the opaque operation of the legacy it describes, for, to switch metaphors from a vocal to a visual register, in the wake of the philosopher’s *oeuvre*, whose outer edges no longer seem discernible, romanticists seem almost to fall under the gaze of a gracious and beneficent master whose eyes they cannot meet, and whose mastery is anything but a sure thing. In *Specters of Marx*, his most sustained exploration of the vicissitudes of inheritance, Derrida called this enabling and imposing asymmetry “the visor effect”—a phenomenon that is vividly captured by Antony Gormley’s steely and implacable sculpture, different images of which grace the front covers of this special double issue of *Studies in Romanticism*.

With the memorable exception of “Living On,” an essay written not so much about but on the unending occasion of P. B. Shelley’s *Triumph of Life*, Derrida had relatively little to say about romanticism as such. But thinkers working on the archives, histories, and conceptualities written in its name have had many different things and a great deal to say about Derrida: sometimes directly or discreetly or inadvertently, sometimes indirectly in the shape of negotiating with what is called “theory,” sometimes in the form of a kind of commerce (without commerce) with troublesome ghosts (“de Man” and “history” are scholarly apparitions that come quickly to mind), sometimes with boundless curiosity or thoughtful hospitality, and sometimes inhospitably in the mode of repelling an unbidden specter. (On this latter point, it’s worth recalling that it is Derrida who argues towards the end of his life that hospitality and inhospitality share a relationship much finer than one of contrast.) As romanticists with an allergy to “theory” have by now discovered, the problem is not punctually having done with Derrida, as unlikely as the success of that disavowal might seem; it is rather with the more interminable difficulty of *having done with having done with him*, and with all that he represents or is imagined to personify about knowledge, reading, criticism, politics, history, ethics, and literature—among many other pertinent questions quickening humanities research and teaching broadly conceived—but vexing in especially productive ways for romanticism and romanticists alike. Whatever its particular motivations or valences, the ongoing and seemingly unavoidable work with and in the midst of the irrepressible otherness of Derrida’s intellectual inheritance shows no signs of abating, even if its modalities continue to change and multiply. After Derrida, indeed, *le déluge*. The diverse critical rhetorics and thematic foci, the often very distinct ways in which the essays

gathered here take up the question of Derrida's legacies for romanticism, the idiomatic and dissimilar signals with which the contributors identify themselves as fellow travelers, attest to this fact, and remind us that one of the reasons for the open-ended nature of the project at hand is that both Derrida and romanticism are peculiarly preoccupied with the problem of life, death, and living-on, as well as the work of mourning and the irreducible remainder, not to mention a host of other matters falling under the enigmatic aegis of "legacies." What remains constant is that Derrida's thought remains meaningful to these essayists, not only in spite but also because of the disappointing valedictions forbidding mourning that have haunted discussions of his presence in the university—and well beyond—since his untimely death in the autumn of 2004.<sup>2</sup>

I think that it would be fair to say that no disciplinary formation in the academy has responded more forcefully, complicatedly, or eventfully to Derrida's interventions than romantic studies. Starting more or less in the 1970's, romanticism became the hinterland where North American literary studies in particular demonstrated a prescient cordiality towards what would come to be called theory, welcoming—although not without some trepidation—its embodiment in the strange and changeful shapes of Derrida and Paul de Man. As the generational mix of the scholars collected here attests, it is welcoming it still, especially if we understand hospitality as Derrida came to characterize it—as a gesture that combines complex immunizing and indemnifying impulses with those of amity and receptivity. What makes the situation even more difficult to parse is the ways in which the relationship between Derrida and romanticism can be restaged as one between phantasms of "Derrida" and "de Man," a pairing that was at once activated and complicated by the colloquy that the two figures actually did conduct about, among many other things, the importance of Rousseau. That this conversation continued long after his friend's death and after the debacle of the "wartime writings" suggests the degree to which Derrida remained alive not only to de Man's unimpaired significance in the humanities but also, more generally, to the ongoing role that a theoretically inflected romanticism—here figured by "de Man"—might well continue to play in its future. Keeping faith with de Man (and here we might recall that for Derrida nothing is more imperilled, agonistic, or undetermined than faith), Derrida in effect models and calls for a hospitality to romanticism, or to a certain romanticism, an endeavor dedicated not to the

2. For more extended discussions of the question of disavowing Derrida and theory, see Clark, "Bereft: Derrida's Memory and the Spirit of Friendship," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106.2 (Spring 2007): 291–324, and "'Waving, not drowning': On the Lives of Theory," *SiR* 44.2 (Summer 2005): 261–70.

certainty of cognition but to the risks of reading, and to the open-ended and improvisational labor of what Kant would call “reflective judgment.”

Moreover, the very title of Derrida’s last substantial essay on the subject—“Typewriter Ribbon”—reminds us that legacies are over-written by anonymous and indelible forces that are machine-like in their indifference to the pathos and drama of the realm of scholarly “personalities,” the realm to which de Man’s influence had often been safely if mistakenly con-signed.<sup>3</sup> Yet why Derrida and de Man, much less the thought-formation which brought the two bodies of thought into a partly imaginary entente (ironically celebrated in a 1990 painting by Mark Tansey, *Derrida Queries de Man*), came to have the impact that they did on academic romanticism remains a question very much still to be asked, much less answered, although several essays collected in this forum offer up promising signs of what that time-to-come and that history could look like. Part of the difficulty of this future work stems from the fact that we have yet to take the measure of either Derrida’s legacies or romanticism’s (these efforts are of course interminable), making the prospect of thinking the two inheritances together, at once indissociable and heterogeneous, as daunting as it is necessary—like any inheritance worthy of the name. At the very least, we could claim that beginning with the English translation of the *Grammatology* in the mid 1970s, and probably for some time before, and then in the wake of the proliferating questions and problems that were subsequently signed by his name, romanticism was irrevocably changed by Derrida’s presence. But he gave romanticists a new critical language with which to pose questions that they had in many respects already asked themselves, often in deconstructive registers predating the advent of what would come to be named, for better or for worse, “post-structuralism.” Derrida’s legacy for romanticism was thus in some sense felt in anticipation of itself, this, in a way that might well bring to mind that queer postcard he offered to send out into the world many years ago, the one in which Plato stands behind Socrates and dictates the terms of the legacy in which he, Plato, will subsequently discover himself.<sup>4</sup> Something analogously unlawful, unexpected, and reversible obtains between “Derrida” and “romanticism,” joined as they are by this difficult knowledge, this volatile mode of history and relationality that we sometimes too quickly call a “legacy.”

Derrida’s work forms an inheritance that romanticism both elects and

3. See “Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2) (‘within such limits’),” trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory*, eds. Tom Cohen, Barbara Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001) 277–360.

4. Matthew Paris’ strange thirteenth-century image, archived in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, was reproduced on the cover of Derrida’s *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987). This edition of Derrida’s book came with a detachable postcard bearing the same image.

to which it finds itself answerable, and this complex responsibility is further animated by the fact that Derrida's work yields up a singularly searching critical rhetoric with which to consider the very question of inheritance—its opacities, imperatives, resistances, and futures. What Derrida says of legacies in general speaks powerfully to romanticists: "We do not yet know what we have inherited; we are the legatees of this Greek word and of what it assigns to us, enjoins us, bequeaths us or leaves us, indeed delegates or leaves over to us."<sup>5</sup> But this not-knowing and being-left-behind does not mean that, as inheritors, we remain spellbound or immobilized by what we have been bequeathed; on the contrary, as the essays gathered together here demonstrate in tellingly distinct ways, an inheritance is the complicated milieu, the place, as Derrida was fond of saying, *in which we find ourselves to be*, and thus the scene of writing and reading, of thinking and acting, in which judgments must be made and risks assumed, whether to adjust to a legacy's apparent lines of force or to cut transversely across them. We will not know with certainty which is which until after the fact, and even then the answer will be impossible to ascertain since our negotiations with an inheritance transform that inheritance in turn. As Derrida argues in *Specters of Marx*, a legacy is too easily normalized as a matter of passive reception or one-sided interpellation; for him, it is inconceivable without the active notion of choice, and of finding the means with which to respond responsibly and to do justice to its givenness: "An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction to reaffirm by choosing*" (16). To recast something Marc Redfield says in another context, if romanticists experience Derrida's work as compelling or even inescapable, this is paradoxically because he "offers an inheritance worth choosing."<sup>6</sup>

"Romanticism" as a term is a relative rarity in Derrida's vast *oeuvre* in part because of the degree to which it came to be indigenous to the specific institutional settings, disciplinary histories, and scholarly worries of the Canadian, British, and American academies. Moreover, it is no doubt true that much of what currently goes by the name was subsumed for Derrida under what were for him more expansive and locally significant rubrics, chief among those being what he called, with typical discretion, "what is called the eighteenth century."<sup>7</sup> This was a phrase that he sometimes used

5. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005) 9. Hereafter cited as *Rogues*.

6. "Derrida, Europe, Today," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106.2 (Spring 2007): 373–92. Hereafter cited as "Europe."

7. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 98. Hereafter cited as *Grammatology*. Geoffrey Bennington provides a very useful discussion of the significances of "the eighteenth-century" in Derrida's work in "Derrida's 'Eighteenth Century,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40.3 (2007): 381–93.

to locate an epistemological crisis about the nature of language and presence whose largest effects were framed by Descartes and Hegel but whose heterogeneous heart lay in “Rousseau” and “Kant”—proper names and conceptual nodal points that could scarcely be dissociated from romanticism and indeed could be said to form its pedagogical, cultural, and theoretical *métier*. The “epoch” of Rousseau” (99) might then describe the more extensive literary and philosophical culture within which “romanticism” emerged as an idea and a placeholder for the moment at which “the problem of writing” (98) became vexed. “The problem of writing”: that was the immensely suggestive difficulty upon which, it could be argued, an entire galaxy of theory in romanticism hazarded itself in the 1980s, a wager and a preoccupation vividly inaugurated by the 1979 special issue of *Studies in Romanticism*, edited by de Man and entitled “The Rhetoric of Romanticism.” That “*l’écriture*” is already at that point jostling against another term, “rhetoric,” says a great deal about the then rapidly proliferating future of “deconstruction” in “America”—a future, I might add, that has always been too punctually foreclosed, not to say policed, by reifying it as a matter exclusive or answerable to that imaginary place, “Yale.”

Had Derrida spoken more often about romanticism, he no doubt would have treated it with the provisionality he reserved for “the eighteenth century.” Like that descriptor, “romanticism” is best treated as paleonymic in nature, at once haunted by sedimented histories and beckoning towards undetermined futures. “Romanticism, if such a thing exists” [*s’il y en a*], or, in a more situated fashion, “what *you* call Romanticism”: these are turns of phrase to which we can imagine him resorting, proceeding with that odd combination of decorum and provocation so characteristic of the rhythm of his work whenever he appealed to phenomena that were irreducible to their concepts: for example, animals, democracy, deconstruction, the gift, hospitality, forgiveness, friendship, and Europe. It should not go without saying that each of these terms has powerful romantic resonances, the depths of which have yet to be sounded. But we do not need to put these words—“*romantisme, s’il y en a*”—in Derrida’s mouth because romanticists have been pronouncing and translating them, as well as parsing their significance, for as long as there has been something like romanticism to name and with which to dwell thoughtfully. The myriad ways in which this particular thought-form has for generations shown itself to be unusually unstable, not a phenomenon that did not happen or that was absent (although this too has been suggested at various points in literary-institutional history, including the present-day, which sees the waning of romanticism as a curricular subject and field of tenurable expertise), but rather present in a manner that is shot through with absences, remainders, elisions, hidden histories and missed opportunities: a possibility, yes, but always happening in the mode of its uncontainable impossibilities. That is why romanticism

continues to stand as a figure for such contradictory things, and why it has lent itself to skirmishes organized around suspiciously symmetrical opposites: ideological mystification and revolutionary intervention, quietism and violence, high formality and historical materiality, sobriety and intoxication, “Promethean” assertion and “Asian” interrogation (the latter antithesis is the focus of Theresa Kelley’s thoughtful contribution to this volume).

The temptation in romantic studies has been to treat the age of putatively ahistorical “theory” as having come and gone, embodied first in the figure of de Man, and now, Derrida, together supplanted by an imagined age of historical “practice.” But that tidy account of *Bildung* (and the story of the modernization of criticism) remains profoundly unsettled because romanticism is itself structured by an analogous narrative, albeit with this crucial difference: the normative distinction between the ideologically burdened past and the demystified present upon which our postmodern “Jacobin imaginary”<sup>8</sup> is founded is not only operational in romantic writings but also recognized by contemporaneous thinkers to be a historical *figure* that, as a figure, calls for sustained, slow, and risky reading rather than being treated as an achieved fact undeserving of theoretical reflection. Insofar as romanticism is an invention of itself, it is always already theoretical. In other words, there is no overcoming a certain Derridean inflected resistance to romantic historicization because romanticism is itself this resistance, thereby making it a theory of itself. Romanticists like Orrin N. C. Wang have been unrelenting in their attempt to keep the “fantastic modernity” characterizing both romantic writings *and* their twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers in the foreground, not to collapse the two moments into a long Romantic period but as a way of spelling out the importance of attending to the curious ways in which each body of thought constitutes a reading of the other—and in this way preventing one or the other from becoming hypostatized as the “original” to the other’s “translation.” Here the task of the translator is at once necessary and impossible, creating the condition of hermeneutical derangement that ensures romanticism’s futures. Among one of the many legacies of romanticism will have been the unexpected effects of this dizzying turn, or *le tour*, as Derrida would call it, making romanticism a figure for our own vexed and vexing relationship with history, whether within the specialized confines of literary studies departments or in the wider world whose imprint on those departments is felt daily and mightily. Romanticism is less a period concept than a volatile discourse at once *on* and *of* modernity, and this explains its curious oppositional ideological fluidity, from reactionary to revolutionary,

8. I borrow this phrase from Orrin N. C. Wang, after Chantal Mouffe. See *Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000) 65.



false consciousness to self-consciousness, naive to ironic, anachronistic to futural.

Derrida's essay, "Living On," is sometimes said to be his first and last word on romanticism, and in certain important ways having to do with his reception in the field, this is true. Aside from the illuminating details of its counter-intuitive transpositional engagement with Shelley and Blanchot, in which each thinker's reflections on mortality and fatality is, as it were, read athwart the other, the essay is significant because no other intervention by Derrida became positioned vis-à-vis romanticism in quite the same way. The attention that it is given in this collection of essays (especially Sara Guyer's contribution) attests both to its historical importance to the field and its ongoing productive opacities. Arguably the essay's eminence is inseparable from its being published alongside de Man's influential (not to say, for some, notorious) provocation, "Shelley Disfigured," for together they came, after the fact, to be seen as setting in motion an articulation of "deconstruction and criticism" whose problems and possibilities continue to be a challenge to thought. We could even say that they form the "coupled pretext"<sup>9</sup> for a romanticism to come, standing metonymically for the yet to be understood triangulation of romanticism, de Man, and Derrida in the humanities. The astonishing thing is that both essays, although argued in vastly different theoretical registers (a difference that was perhaps not wholly understood at the time, even, it seems, by Geoffrey Hartman, who yoked them together, along with J. Hillis Miller's contribution, under the banner of "boa-constructors" and as essays addressing "the 'abysm' of words"—descriptions that seem now, in retrospect, to be oddly inadequate<sup>10</sup>), critique the unwarranted yet irrepressible surety that readers place in figures of originarity and relationality (x paired with or opposed to y; x following, without, or grounding y, etc.), figures that form the possibility of cultural history and literary periodization, and indeed of intelligibility itself. Perhaps it is their rigorous and redoubled disavowal of genetic and developmental forms of historical knowledge that accounts for the desire to write them into a genealogy of the modes of theory and romanticism. The fact that romanticism—and a canonical romantic like Shelley—forms the occasion for such a difficult lesson reminds us that by the late 1970s the field had become what Chandler calls, with more irony than I would be willing to muster, "the prestige field of methodological advancement."<sup>11</sup> This case could and probably should still be made, if for no other

9. Jacques Derrida, "Living On / Border Lines," trans. James Hulbert, *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1979) 77. Hereafter cited as "Living On."

10. "Preface," *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1979) ix.

11. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998) 137.

reason than that romanticism today is unimaginable without putting it in the context of what it had become at the moment that Derrida's and de Man's interventions—"Living On" and "Shelley Disfigured" forming not two examples among many, but uniquely memorable, singularly intractable contributions to romantic scholarship—demanded to be reckoned with. What is perhaps most telling about this strange *groupe de recherche*, given the historicist turn that would subsequently take place in romanticism, and given its agonistic relationship with the life and afterlife of deconstruction in criticism around the very question of historical difference and the difference that history makes, is that Derrida's and de Man's essays at no point call for, much less exemplify, an evasion of history, but rather insist upon a rejection of its unproblematical inevitability, a disavowal of the almost irrepressible desire to confuse history with empiricism, and with what is imagined to be punctually available to the thought of the living present. In the wake of "Living On" and "Shelley Disfigured," romantic history has remained a difficulty rather than a *fait accompli*, a figure for a critique of history and of historicisms—a field troubled by radical loss and untranslatable remainders, and by the alien, if barely acknowledged, prospect of idealisms without absolutes and of a materiality without matter.

Now only a few years after the publication of "Living On," but overshadowed by its strange light, Derrida did in fact speak again of romanticism, and in an equivalently robust fashion. On this occasion it is not Shelley but Schelling that is the focus of his remarks. A British romantic literary history going back to Coleridge, who, as we know, read Schelling not wisely but too well, had recovered the German idealist's *Naturphilosophie* and *Kunstphilosophie* for a humanist and meliorist tradition exemplified by M. A. Abrams' influential *Natural Supernaturalism*, but this is not the Schelling to whom Derrida refers. Neither is it the Schelling of the middle-period that saw the publication of his masterwork on human freedom, or the composition and recomposition of his unfinished *Ages of the World*—rhetorically and conceptually hybrid texts that unwork German idealism from within and that have, with constant reference to Derrida or to other contemporary theorists, fascinated a subsequent generation of romanticists, including several contributors to this volume (for example, David Farrell Krell, Tilottama Rajan, and David L. Clark). Delivered in 1984, Derrida's lecture—entitled "Theology of Translation"—tarries instead with Schelling's *On University Studies*, which was his rejoinder to Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties* and which rewrites an Enlightenment discourse on the university in post-Enlightenment terms—a move that typifies the emergence of (romantic) theory on the ground of philosophy. As Derrida points out, the divergences between Schelling and Kant reproduce significant differences already troubling the "interior" of each philosopher's reflections upon the

organization of knowledge and the institutionalization of philosophy. More or less at the same moment in the history of romantic criticism, we might recall, de Man was ironically daring audiences at Cornell to “forget about Schelling” (de Man’s point being that his troublesome presence in the narratives of philosophical history is what made him unforgettable<sup>12</sup>), while at the University of Toronto, Derrida in effect calls his bluff, demonstrating that close readers of the German romantic thinker, such that they were then, had not been reading Schelling nearly closely enough. In the earlier essay on Shelley and Blanchot, the question “What is translation?” (77) had preoccupied Derrida in the elaborate footnote or paratext that is co-extensive with “Living On,” entitled “Border Lines,” but here in the Schelling talk the question is brought into the body of the work and made the *raison d’être* for it. And with this shift in emphasis, the problem of translation is brought into the nearest possible conceptual proximity with the question of romanticism. What Derrida notices is that Schelling’s romantic circle recasts the conflict of the faculties as the conflict of the languages, but with that translation Kant’s emphasis on the regulated and lawful administration of difference is given up, to be replaced by something that is at once dangerous, desirous, and intriguing:

Roughly speaking, what we call German Romanticism, which was *at once* a moment of intense, restless, tortured, fascinated reflection on translation, its possibility, its necessity, its meaning for German language and literature *and* a moment when a certain thinking about *Bildung*, *Einbildung*, and all the modifications of *bilden* are inseparable from what one could call precisely the imperative of translation, the task of the translator, the duty-to-translate [*devoir-traduire*]. (“Theology” 65)

Derrida gives us much to think about in this sentence, which we can use as a kind of shorthand for the lecture of which it is a part and as a form of semaphore for some of the principal ways in which his work and the work of romanticism constitute an unfinished and unstable colloquy. (Part of that conversation is no doubt quietly routed here through the last of de Man’s 1983 Messenger Lectures, namely his talk on Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator,” whose critical rhetoric and argument forms an unspoken background to Derrida’s claims about Schelling.<sup>13</sup>) We note right away that Derrida treats “German Romanticism” with a by now familiar caution: “what we call German Romanticism” defamiliarizes the term without

12. “Kant and Schiller,” *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996) 161.

13. “‘Conclusions,’ Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Task of the Translator,’ Messenger Lecture, Cornell University, March 4, 1983,” *Yale French Studies* 69 (1984): 25–46.

making it inaccessible either. That hesitancy is immediately redoubled or even tripled, for Derrida warns us not only that “German Romanticism” is up for grabs as a period-metaphor but also that what he wants to say about it will not be refined or sufficiently felicitous, as if what he were about to argue was going to be said too quickly and in a manner that coarsens a situation that calls for more precision and subtlety. In other words, whatever “German romanticism” is, it is always already a translation of itself. The fact that Derrida discusses the question of translation (beginning with an acknowledgment of the limits of his own “translation” of the matter at hand) and does so in French, about “German language and literature,” all the while speaking “in the anglophone part of a bilingual country,” as he points out earlier in the same lecture series,<sup>14</sup> complicates and exemplifies the situation quite nicely. (The specific *locality* of Derrida’s lectures and seminars, and the irreducibly occasional nature of all of his writings is worth keeping in mind, but perhaps especially so considering the subsequent emergence of forms of contemporary criticism that, as Ian Baucom observes, identifies “the postmodern [with its various devotions to the anecdote, the local, the locale, the detail, the non-totalizing, the singular, and the politics of melancholy] as, among other things, a belated or neo-Romanticism.”<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Baucom points to the work done in the 1990s by Alan Liu and David Simpson—the latter contributes the lead essay in this volume—but it is worth asking whether or to what degree each of their quite distinct strands of romantic theory and critical practice were quickened by this pervasive and so often foregrounded situatedness in Derrida’s own work. Was the then emerging impulse in romantic criticism to explore the significances of localism and particularity in a kind of silent conversation with Derrida’s example, the ways in which his work consistently drew attention to cultural sites of philosophy, and to the becoming-philosophy of philosophy, its irrepressible translation from the idiomatic to the universal and back again? One thinks of the bare settings that Plato gives to some of his dialogues, the scanty but suggestive background details that remind us that philosophy is also a *mise-en-scène*, that even its most immaterial claims must of necessity be situated, that the unlocatable and untimely pass through a place and a time, and that philosophy *happens*, not in some utopic region but here or there, in any case, always in the middle of things. But what could be more “romantic” than that? Or more “Derridean”? Before the sentence beginning “Roughly speaking, what we call

14. “If There is Cause to Translate I: Philosophy in its National Language (Toward a ‘litterature en français),” *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy* 2, 6. Hereafter cited as “If There is Cause.”

15. “A ‘Stranger’s Near Approach:’ Afterlives of Romanticism,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.1 (Winter 2003): 4.

German Romanticism . . ." is under way, then, we are in the midst of various unpredictable translational effects, reminding us that Derrida can neither write about translation from a vantage point of pure translatability, nor refrain from writing *as if* that translatability were possible—precisely the aporia that he will discern in Schelling and that he will identify with romanticism, so-called.

Wholly framed by the problematic it frames, "German romanticism" cannot reflect disinterestedly on the problem of translation from a safe and patronizing distance but must think and write with it and within it, in the heat and dust of the world of words, so to speak. It would be difficult to imagine a more weighty lesson for our own time. The romantics to whom Derrida refers work in "German," yes, but "foreign" ideas and words, which at once mark and prescribe the phantasmatic borders of a language, as well as complicate their partitioning force, haunt the purity of that imaginary national dialect with what Derrida calls the "possibility of being elsewhere in language" ("If There is Cause" 7). It is as if for Derrida being German at the end of the eighteenth century means being in two (or more) places at once, and thus in a unique position to grasp that what is said and thought could always be said and thought differently. It is that never-to-be-vanquished chance that activates romanticism for the French philosopher, and that makes it an ethics to be affirmed as much as an historical moment to be described. There is no "German," no "German romanticism," without this wager on and with the other and many others, no "cultural identity," as Derrida says in another context, that "presents itself as the opaque body of an untranslatable idiom."<sup>16</sup> That is why the German romantic way of being in the world is irreducibly agonistic in nature, "intense, restless, tortured, and fascinated," as Derrida says with such precision, speaking in an affective register that more closely resembles the rhetoric of love and loss than the discourse of speculative philosophy or literary history, much less linguistic historiography. The task of the translator is also somehow the work of mourning, each labor enlivened by and trapped within the twinned problems of the promise of fidelity and the threat of infidelity to the memory of the other.

In the *tableau vivant* that Derrida briefly stages on behalf of Schelling and his romantic colleagues, the Germans confront simultaneous efforts: the work of translation *and* "a certain thinking about *Bildung, Einbildung*." But again no sooner is this pair articulated than its terms are differentiated, for "formation" and "imagination" (or "in-formation," as *Ein-bildung* is sometimes cannily translated in Schelling) are themselves unworked by another

16. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Bloomington & Indianapolis: U of Indiana P, 1992) 72. Hereafter cited as *Other*.

problem, the very problem of the other: namely, the imperative, task, and duty to translate. Two impulses at the heart of romanticism seem at first to be antithetical. On the one hand, a reflection upon translation whose troublesomeness registers the ways in which this “linguistic” phenomenon is also felt in the blood and along the heart, which is Derrida’s way of saying that the thinking and speaking subject, whom we might otherwise imagine to be comfortably at home in his or her “own” language, is in fact from the start unsettled and displaced, worried by something that cannot be assimilated to thought and so is experienced in the mode of restlessness and even a kind of “torture.” The experience of the otherness of these affects and intensities determines, as Werner Hamacher has said, “reason *as* bodily reason and the body *as* the body of reason”<sup>17</sup>—a translation problem whose consequences and ubiquity could hardly be overemphasized. As Kant knew, and the romantics then learned, a rational life is by its nature an open-ended and contingent existence, lived as a life of translation rather than as a machine of transmission. (Whence comes this imperative? It would be important at some point to explore the degree to which the duty-to-translate is itself machine-like, this because it introduces a form of prostheticizing technicity into the heart of mortal life. The language of the other, *as* a language, also translates the other of language, the radically in-human alterity of which language is, as de Man would say, an effacing “figure.”) “That is why *one must translate*,” Derrida argues in his reading of Schelling, “and this translation stems from the finitude of individuals” (“Theology” 79). Before the prospect of the question of translation, which is hardly one question among many, but at the core of what it means to know and act and be with others, living and breathing German romantic subjects could then be said to *tremble* in their delirious relationship with language. Their unwillingness to give up on the question, and their inability to answer it, convulses those subjects in “a moment of intense, restless, tortured, fascinated reflection”; it is not so much the moral law that makes them shiver, as in Kant, but another duty, perhaps more fundamental than the categorical imperative, and that is the “duty-to-translate.” Or perhaps the duty-to-translate, *as* a duty, is connected in some obscure way to the categorical imperative, which, after all, compels us to think and behave otherwise, and which leaves us the task of freely translating the pure generality of the law into its moment-by-moment idioms.

On the other hand, a “certain thinking about *Bildung*, *Einbildung*”—which is of course the subject matter of a classical strand of romanticism, no doubt less legible in criticism than it once was, but for all that no less press-

17. *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Peter Fenves (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) 103.

ing or irrepressible—affirms the shaping powers of the creative faculty and the virile self-formation of the autonomous individual and national subject. Who could say today, in an age that witnesses the violent formation and deformation of imagined communities, in an age dominated by the aesthetic seductions of the “image” and the simulacra, that a certain thinking about *Bildung* and *Einbildung* isn’t still taking place, isn’t still shaping political subjectivities, institutional frameworks, and educational relations? *Bildung* and *Einbildung* are terms that are central to the development of narratives of education and development, and are therefore closely related to another problematical figure of understanding underwriting romanticism and its afterlife, namely the aesthetic. But as Derrida notes, in Schelling these narratives are also queerly scandalized; “the totalizing gathering together of *Einbildung*” (“Theology” 67) finds itself subjected to the centripetal force of translation, or what we call “translation,” a force that is at once unbearable and bewitching, and that arrives, like some uninvited house-guest who proved to be around all along, not from “without” as a difficulty that is separate from the imagination’s own concerns, in the way that the spirit is often distinguished from the letter, or form from matter, but as if from “within” and as essential in nature, a worry that cannot be put out of mind and that the body will not forget. In other words, the translation of otherness and the otherness of translation is not a problem to the side of the labor of the imagination or the faculty of formation but intrinsic to their work; indeed, one could say that it is the event-like “work” of that work, an instance of a materiality without matter, if there is such a thing. Schelling gives us a language with which to consider this conundrum in especially productive ways, his vivid philosophical prose yielding up images with which to unbuild and build romanticism’s complicated faith in the promise of *Bildung* and *Einbildung*. An absolutely untranslatable idiom would be the definition of inertness, not worklessness (which has more complicated connotations in contemporary theory), but being-without-work. i.e. sheer stasis. But an absolutely translatable idiom would fare no better; for as Schelling says elsewhere (reminding us that his philosophical work is in a constant process of translating itself), without a minimal force of inhibition or resistance, everything in the nature of things would fly off in all directions, and being would dissipate itself into uniform nothingness, suffering a kind of entropic heat-death.<sup>18</sup> Between two modalities or per-

18. As Andrew Bowie argues, referring to the role that inhibition plays in Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, “the infinite force . . . would dissipate itself at one go—and not even know it was happening—if there were not something to prevent it.” “‘An absolute transition [translation?] of nature,’ by which Schelling means the complete conversion of its ‘productivity’ into ‘product,’ would lead to death, or to what the philosopher calls ‘an absolute stasis [*Ruhe*].’” See *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (London

haps dreams of languagelessness, then, lies the work of translation, transference, and transposition, impossible as such. How to translate or “reflect” upon this untranslatable opening of translation: a “tortuous” task, indeed, but also “fascinating” to those with the eyes to see it and the ears to hear of it—the ears and eyes of the German romantics, for example. No *Bildung* or *Einbildung*, therefore, that is not also already a translational effort, which is never anything more than a *desire* for the sheltered transference of an idea between two idioms set against the risk that translation actually is, a risk whose outcomes cannot be determined in advance, not while there is a “language” or a “literature” worthy of these names: this would be the law expressed by Derrida’s curious turn of phrase, “the duty to translate.” For there can be no affirmation of an idiomatic subject, for example, a “German” subject, or a subject of “German romanticism,” that is not exposed uncontrollably to the defile of the other, no “originary unity,” to recall Schelling’s phrase, that isn’t haunted coevally by the possibility of translation and repetition, and thus by loss, difference, and distortion. Novalis had said as much: “*Nichts in der Welt ist blos*”: “Nothing is merely, nakedly, what it is,” David Farrell Krell translates; “everything always stands always in relation to another, not accidentally but essentially.”<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, “German romanticism” is not the only cultural location or historical instance where this (de)formation takes place, or rather where it *has* always already taken place, since there is never a time when the translation event will not have “happened.” (And isn’t the idea of an “event” or an “occurrence” not itself a kind of aboriginal translation, at once marking and masking the violence of the inscription of what we here are calling, after Derrida, after Schelling, “translation”? What could be more obscure than the meaning of “translation,” the translation of “translation,” whose *raison d’être* appears only in the mode of its disappearance?) But counter-intuitively Derrida insists in this instance on associating the duty-to-translate, its work and its radically deterritorializing force, with romanticism and with “German romanticism” at that. We are reminded of another gamble in his work, closely related to the one at hand, in which the philosopher names “Europe” as an exemplary word for responsibility and hospitality, this in the name of evoking what he calls “the other heading.” The

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and New York: Routledge, 1993) 109, 41. As David Farrell Krell and Rebecca Gagan have reminded me, Schelling makes this point perhaps most vividly in his discussion of “Inhibition and the Stages of Development.” See *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY P, 2004) 35–53.

19. See “Three Ends of the Absolute: Schelling, Hölderlin, Novalis,” *Idealism without Absolutes: Philosophy and Romantic Culture*, eds. Tilottama Rajan and Arkady Plotnitsky (Albany: SUNY P, 2004) 149.



duty-to-translate appears to emanate from something irreplaceable in “German language and literature.” This is the creditable and promising “place”—if “place” is what it is, amid all these translations and transpositions—reserved for a certain intensity of work with and reflection upon the differences of languages and the problematic of translation, especially the incommensurability of the command to translate and the untranslatability of the multiplicity of languages that Schelling observes in particular being assembled for scrutiny and management in Kant’s *Conflict of the Faculties*: “language of truth (constative) / language of action (performative), public language / private language, scientific (intra-university) language / popular (extra-university) language, spirit / letter, and so forth” (“Theology” 75). Contra Kant, or a certain Kant, “German romanticism” embraces the imperative to write and to speak in several languages and this is precisely because one’s own language is not one, because, in other words, German romanticists know that they have a language, what is called “German,” but that this language is not theirs, not punctually an instance or means of self-possession or self-formation. They are imagined by Derrida, in Schelling’s name, to promise themselves to the task of translation, i.e., to interminable work whose labor would be quite unnecessary if we were not mortal, or if we were what Kant sometimes disparagingly called a *Sprachmaschine*—a gadget—presumably, in which the same meaning could be transposed or transported, without remainder, through an imaginary medium of absolute translatability, into another idiom. But with language and with the irreducibility of language come responsibilities to the other and to many others: to other languages, to the otherness that is language, and to the language of the other, including the other that is oneself; to other bodies of knowledge, modes of thinking, ways of living, or forms of belonging; to other futures and above all to the futures of others, to possibility of their *living-on* in peace. Not a perpetual peace, whose dream Kant was smart enough to realize could be a philosophical alibi and political cover for pacification and normalization, but the peace that Derrida describes, after Schelling, as the riotous condition of translation: “intense, restless, tortured, [and] fascinated.” Translation means welcome, yes, but always from a particular place that calls for a response from a particular place, between unique idioms that each time cannot be translated and yet must endure the defile of translation.

This welcome is not easy and it is not meant to be easy. One is reminded of the difficulty of Hölderlin’s near senseless word-for-word translations of Sophocles, his strange experiments not in felicitously translating Greek into German but in making matters excruciating, the object being to bring into legibility “what in the original belongs to language, and not to meaning as

an extralinguistic correlate susceptible of paraphrase and imitation.”<sup>20</sup> Something in a language, *as* a language, remains radically untranslatable; yet this resistance or inhibition is what marks the very opening of signification. How could language be otherwise, how could it be anything but otherwise than itself and remain a language? It is in the midst of this necessary obscurity de Man glimpses an autonomous inhumanity at work in language, but Derrida’s pathos, his palpable sympathy with the “restlessness” and arduous “fascination” of the romantic translator, turns in another direction, towards an ethics of ethics. Reading Schelling after Derrida, Hölderlin’s literalism helps us grasp the implacable formality of the duty-to-translate: “Translation translates only the untranslatable. One cannot, or should not, translate; there is only translation, if there is any, where there is the untranslatable. That is to say that translation must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible.”<sup>21</sup> Speaking in German, *to* others, the romantic thinker says, in effect, in this work where I am, “I am addressing you, and I commit myself, in this language here; listen how I speak in my language, me, and you can speak to me in your language” (Derrida, *Other* 78). *Listen how I speak in my language, me, and you can speak to me in your language*: each idiom exhibits me as being for the other; wherever “I” am, there too is a language with which I am bourne towards the listener and reader, and that therefore translates me as speaker and writer even as I translate it. In its respectful commitment to this duty, the passion and endurance of the other, and to tarrying with language’s exigencies even and especially up to the worrisome and grueling point at which translation proves to be wholly inadequate to its own concept, “German romanticism” tells us that everything cannot and, more importantly, *should* not be said in a single language, the language of philosophy or of literature or of any other imagined community. How to translate that? How to translate “German” into “romanticism” (or “French” into “theory”)? As Jacques Khalip has recently reminded me, what language *does* the English poet speak to “Rousseau” in *The Triumph of Life*, and he to him? We are so close to the question, so comfortably at home with language, that the necessity and the difficulty of translation that is in fact immanent to the scene

20. I recall de Man’s argument in “‘Conclusions,’ Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Task of the Translator’” 36.

21. Here I deliberately remember and recast Derrida’s assertions about forgiveness. “[F]orgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot, or should not, forgive; there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable. That is to say that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible.” See *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 32–33.

of this encounter with the gnarled stranger goes all but unremarked, even if, in a certain way, nothing matters more. Yet the question is worth asking, and Derrida suggests that there is an obligation to do so, indeed, an obligation “older” than the one—the “German,” the “romantic”—who feels its binding and deranging force.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, by making “German romanticism” the exemplary site of this duty-to-translate, Derrida flirts with mimicking the logic of exemplarity and Eurocentrism which he elsewhere pointedly critiques. This strikes me as a problem that is unavoidable because the impossibility and the necessity of translation will always be explored idiomatically, which is to say wherever we are (culturally, linguistically, and historically), “in a text where we already believe ourselves to be.” As Derrida says in a discussion of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, “the thought of the trace . . . has already taught us that it [is] . . . impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely” (162). If there is no *Bildung* without translation, then there is no translation that isn’t in some sense caught up with the task of *Bildung*, which is to say being at risk of becoming an aesthetic humanist discourse that “inscribes the universal in the proper body of a singularity, of an idiom or a culture, whether this singularity be individual, social, national, state, federal, or confederal, or not” (*Rogues* 72–73).<sup>23</sup> Under these conditions, German romanticism is not one example of the duty-to-translate among many but embodies what Derrida calls “the privilege of being the *good example*,” this by virtue of expressing the “self-affirmation of an identity” that “claims to be responding to the call or assignation of the universal” (*Other* 72). But as Derrida points out, no cultural identity, not even one committed to a certain dis-identification and deterritorialization, can escape the logic of this exemplarism. We see why Derrida is so scrupulous in referring to “a *certain thinking* about *Bildung* [and] *Einbildung*,” in his attempt to acknowledge the consolidating and immunizing gestures at work among the German speaking peoples around 1800 without denying the possibility that amid these gestures, and perhaps even tapping into their fretful energies, another heading is always possible or at least promised. The phrase “*A certain thinking*” concedes that *Bildung* and *Einbildung* are extraordinarily over-determined terms usually put into the service of another discourse, namely the aesthetic humanism about which Marc Redfield has taught us so much (and does so again in his contribution to this collection of essays). According to this familiar cultural narrative, “German” ideas about form, development, education,

22. Personal correspondence, 5 June 2007. The question is also explored in Khalip’s *Anonymous Life: Romanticism and Dispossession* (Stanford UP, forthcoming).

23. For an illuminating discussion of Derrida’s negotiation with and overwriting of the logic of exemplarity, see Redfield, “Derrida, Europe, Today.” My remarks here are profoundly influenced by Redfield’s argument, both in that essay and in his *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003).

community, and responsibility are claimed to be uniquely suited to testifying to “the human essence and to what is proper to man” (Derrida, *Other* 73)—the presumption being that while one should finally *speak* the universal language really used by men, one does so by *thinking* in good philosophical German and in the name of a particular way of being together whose spirit is presumed to be German. As Derrida has argued, so much depends upon the ways in which a philosophical language and a dominant national language are made to reinforce each other, so that the philosophical work of adequation and clarification forms an alibi for the creation of social formations and political subjectivities that are similarly single-minded because believing themselves to be indemnified against ambiguity or obscurity.<sup>24</sup> In truth, each of these two immune responses—philosophical and national—becomes the alibi for the other, and perhaps never more palpably so as in the aesthetic education of a “people.”

But buried amid this metonymic logic where the privileged part is made to stand for the sanctioned whole is another possibility, “a certain thinking,” as Derrida says, harder to discern but by no means illegible, least of all among *die Deutschen* at the end of eighteenth century. There and then, something hard to define, felt as much as known, carried the task of *Bildung* and *Einbildung* away from itself, and nothing in Derrida’s lecture suggests that this voyage has come to an end, even if its itinerary has remained radically uncertain, with the precise point of its embarkation as obscure as its destination. As I’ve suggested, “translation” would appear then to anticipate a Derridean philosopheme that would come to have more importance in his work, namely Europe’s “other heading.” “German romanticism,” like “Europe,” is foreign to itself, and in that estrangement, which is not an accident xenophobically befalling an imagined culture but the tortuous condition out of which it emerges provisionally as an identifiable “culture” in the first place, dwells the hint of another “romanticism” and of an elsewhere *in* “German.” This romanticism, we might say, is to come, because it involves, as Derrida says hopefully of Europe, “the poetic invention of an idiom whose singularity would not yield to any nationalist, not even a European nationalism” (*Rogues* 158). Not a nationalism, yet a certain thinking and a mode of belonging that remains irreducibly idiomatic; not “German romanticism” but, let us say, with circumspection about the Germanness of “German” and the romanticism of the romantics, *what we call German romanticism*. Romanticism’s legacy, recalled so vividly for us in the Schelling lecture, is arguably “not only that which we identify, calculate, and decide

24. This is one of the principal subjects of Derrida’s “If There Is Cause to Translate I: Philosophy in its National Language (Toward a ‘litterature en français),” the first of the lecture series culminating in the Schelling talk I am worrying here. It is also a question that is discussed at length in Dana Hollander’s illuminating *Exemplarity and Chosenness: Rosenzweig and Derrida on the Nation of Philosophy* (Stanford UP, forthcoming 2007).

upon, but the *heading of the other*, before which we must respond, and which we must *remember, of which we must remind ourselves*, the heading of the other being perhaps the first condition of an identity that is not ego-centrism destructive of oneself and the other" (*Other* 15). In other words, "German romanticism" is the promise of where "we, the people of Europe," if there is such a thing, could imagine ourselves traveling, as "intense, restless, tortured, [and] fascinated" a journey as that is and will always be; it is the memory of where "Europe," or a certain "Europe," is going still. What then if a particular thinking about translation and about *Bildung* and *Einbildung* were "the opening onto a history for which the changing of the heading, the relation to the other heading or to the other of heading, is experienced as always possible? An opening and a non-exclusion for which [romanticism] . . . would in some sense be responsible" (17)?

"I would like to believe," Derrida says at the conclusion of *Rogues*, appealing to a faith beyond or to the side of knowledge that is also a faith in knowledge, that "within today's geopolitical landscape, a new thinking and a previously unencountered destination of Europe, along with another responsibility for Europe, are being called on to give a new chance to this idiom. Beyond all Eurocentrism" (158). Derrida's promise, his memory of the promise of the promise, inadvertently brings to mind something Coleridge once suggested about the Germans: although they lacked a cultural and political cohesiveness, this absence was a source of intellectual strength. Precisely because the Germans refused to rally around a national flag, as England was doing, much less project their power elsewhere in the world, and because they had yet, in the name of commerce, utterly to transform the social into a remainderless space of getting and spending, because, in other words, they preferred to live together in a condition of *not*-belonging, the Germans of the romantic period "had many universities," and were "forever thinking."<sup>25</sup> It's a wonderfully suggestive remark, hallucinatory as it is telling, and that of course says a great deal about Coleridge, whose openness to German philosophy was, after all, his way of being otherwise than English, and of being English otherwise. As I've noted elsewhere, Rajan remembers Coleridge's remarks on several occasions in her work, and I cannot but feel that what we are seeing here is a discreet but transparent autobiographical reference about the deterritorializing impulses active in her own thinking as a romanticist and as a theorist who is herself quickened by the sorts of translation questions that Schelling poses for Derrida.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps something similar could be said about the rest of the

25. *Lectures 1818–1819 on the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), Volume 2: 574.

26. David L. Clark, "Tilottama Rajan: On Romantic Migrancy," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 55 (2006): 28.

contributors to this special issue of *Studies in Romanticism*, each of whom not only works in the wake of Derrida's complicated legacy, but also actively transfigures that legacy, negotiating its histories and imagining its futures in distinct ways that speak to their individual, intellectual, generational, disciplinary, and institutional idioms. Every one of those idioms, needless to say, responds to the duty-to-translate and calls for the same—which can never be quite the same—in us. For each, the encounter with the otherness and othernesses of Derrida's thought has been and continues to be an important means by which to sustain and enrich what they appear always already to have known about romanticism: namely, the degree to which it is at odds with itself and forever heading elsewhere. Translating Derrida and being translated in turn by Derrida, they map out different possible itineraries for a romanticism to come.

Rajan has argued that romanticism is “the first modern intellectual movement sensitive to singularity: singularity . . . not individuality, which elides much that is different within persons to construct an identity.”<sup>27</sup> She cites Nancy and Deleuze as her interlocutors on this point, but both she and Derrida evoke Antoine Berman's argument that romanticism is fundamentally structured by what he calls “the experience of the foreign”<sup>28</sup>—an experience, it should be emphasized, that is not an exotic ruse, another expression of romanticism's Eurocentric inability to escape its self-representations, but a more fundamental and obscure encounter with others and with many others that Derrida has explored and indeed exemplified in his work. As Berman intimates, translation is nothing less than a word for welcome: “The very aim of translation—to open up in writing a certain relation with the Other. . . . It is diametrically opposed to the ethnocentric structure of every culture, that species of narcissism by which every society wants to be a pure and unadulterated Whole” (4). We might note here that insofar as “German romanticism” is identified with that risky and, as it were, *transnationalist* hospitality, it differs from our often anxiously monolingual contemporaneity, which is decidedly *not* romantic inasmuch as theory, personified by Derrida, is treated by too many as a synonym for “the other, the foreign, and for the foreign that threatens to take up residence within our borders, our classrooms,” as David Simpson has recently observed.<sup>29</sup> In a post-9/11 world, Simpson argues, the experience of the foreign may feel repulsive and threatening, yet it is the one form of belonging (or what Derrida calls *vivre ensemble*) that is most needed during an age of a world at war, whether that age is ours or that of the Napoleonic nineteenth century.

27. “On (Not) Being Post-colonial,” *Postcolonial Text* 2.1 (2006): n.p.

28. *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, trans. S. Heyvaert (Albany: SUNY P, 1992).

29. *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006) 8.

This difficulty is what makes Derrida's work—not in spite but because of its strangeness, its arduousness and resistance to thought—so pressing, Simpson suggests, but what I think is revealing is that when we turn to Derrida to explore the same question, Derrida gestures towards the romantics, the very field that Simpson has advanced in such significant ways, and always with an eye to and for the other. This not-belonging, this constant shuttling between and within the imagined communities of German, French, and English, as between literature and philosophy, theory and romanticism, history and theory, common and uncommon sense, is not so much a methodology and a way of being in the academic world, although it is these things too, as a figure for what makes romanticism what it is, and what accounts for its troublesomeness and its necessity, now more than ever. This “intense, restless, tortured, [and] fascinated” cordiality towards the other, which, *as* other, remains unthought and that which has yet to be thought, inspires the work of the contributors to this memorial forum for at least two reasons: first, because the vicissitudes and promises of hospitality are for them uniquely articulated in the idioms of romanticism as the most consequential instance in European modernity in which it is possible for radical forms of alterity to be welcomed, critiqued, and theorized; and second, because Derrida's legacies are what connect romanticism most agonistically to the irreducible foreignness of the present day and that in fact make romanticism a reading and a translation of us. Of the legacies of Jacques Derrida, let me say this: among the many, many things his thinking and writing bequeathed to us, and left with us, as if forgetting something so that he would have an excuse to come back to a beloved place, is romanticism. We are what he left behind.

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