



Geoffrey Hartman and the Affective Ecology of Romantic Form

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Abstract

Geoffrey Hartman has not only been a leading voice in the study of Romanticism, but he has also made a major impact on our understanding of historical trauma and the memory of catastrophe. The combination of these two foci enables Hartman's work to conceptualize a more indirect and subterranean relation between literary form and history than most historicist research paradigms assume. At a time when the historicist paradigms that have long dominated the study of Romanticism are increasingly being challenged by a return to literary form, a number of recent books have taken Hartman's cue in conceiving of Romantic form as a medium that, precisely because it shields the self from the overwhelming and potentially traumatizing impact of history, paradoxically allows history to register as affect. These new approaches differ from the so-called 'new formalism' in that, again like Hartman, they emphasize the phenomenological role of literary form – i.e. the role of form in our affective ecology, or the interanimation of mind and world. While these books are all firmly anchored in Romanticism, they extend the scope of Romantic studies by mobilizing the achievements of Romantic form as a vital modern phenomenon.

1. Introduction

At a time when the historicist paradigms that have long dominated the study of Romanticism are increasingly being challenged by a return to form, the long and distinguished career of Geoffrey Hartman stands as a powerful reminder of the irreducible complexity besetting the relations between form and reality. While his landmark study of *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787–1814* (published in 1964) established him as a major voice in the study of Romanticism, his work has since the early 1980s increasingly been occupied with questions of Holocaust remembrance. Indeed, as Sara Guyer has remarked, Hartman may seem 'to have two oeuvres, the one devoted to thinking literature and culture after Auschwitz, the other to a reading of Wordsworth (and romanticism more generally)' (235n31). This double focus is further complicated by Hartman's role as a (sometimes reluctant) fellow traveller of so-called 'Theory' in the 1970s and 1980s. His turn to questions of trauma and remembrance, moreover, has not gone at the expense of the intensity of his engagement with Romanticism. Indeed, his books *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (1987) and *The Fateful Question of Culture* (1997) reveal the surprising continuity, rather than the rupture, between his earlier study of Wordsworth's poetry and his more sophisticated account of Wordsworth's particular poetical success in terms judiciously borrowed from the domains of psychoanalysis, deconstruction and semiotics in the 1970s and 1980s.

Since three decades, Hartman's commitment to what he calls 'the Wordsworthian Enlightenment' has coexisted with an investigation of the afterlife of the horrors of the 20th century; and even if his Romantic criticism has not adopted the historicist methodologies that have largely prevailed in the field of Romantic studies, the coexistence of

these two themes in his work raises the possibility of a more indirect and subterranean relation between literary form and history than most research paradigms assume. The better part of this essay reviews four recent books in which this possibility is actualized in a way that is directly or indirectly indebted to Hartman's work. These books study the powers of form to mediate a psychological engagement with a historical reality that is not otherwise intellectually or empirically accessible. Remarkably, while these books engage in broad explorations of pre- and post-Romantic modernity, all four tie this notion of literary form as historical medium to the Romantic era. Their alignment of form and history has affinities with the return to prominence of the aesthetic in, among others, the so-called 'new formalism' (Levinson), yet these books differ from these formalist tendencies in that they emphasize the phenomenological role of literary form – i.e. the role of form in what Hartman calls the 'ecology or interanimation of mind and world' ('Dream' 166). Before I turn to these studies, I briefly sketch the interrelations between form, history and phenomenology in Hartman's work, while reviewing some other recent works that bear the trace of his achievement.

2. *History, Trauma and Hartman's Romanticism*

Two of the themes connecting Hartman's account of Romanticism and his writing on Holocaust remembrance are the phenomenology of perception and the ways the (poetical) subject relates to the world. Much of his work on the memory of catastrophe deals with the genre of video testimony, with which he has been involved since he co-founded the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale in the early 1980s. Hartman promotes video testimony as a privileged medium for the remembrance of extreme suffering by underlining the peculiar interaction between eye and ear through which it engages its audience: while voice alone would have 'the effect of disembodied sound, as if from the dead', the interaction of voice and face manages to 'reduce the ghostliness' (Balfour and Comay 494). In this way, video testimony manages to transmit memories in ways that do not overwhelm or alienate the audience, but that make these memories affectively and intellectually assimilable. Indeed, the less direct mode of video testimony, by avoiding the numbing or retraumatization that often besets more direct representations of violence, paradoxically allows history to register.

Far from constituting a break with his Romantic criticism, Hartman's defense of a gentle mode of representation is in fact remarkably continuous with what he considers Wordsworth's unprecedented poetical achievement. Three aspects of that continuity are particularly important. First, the meticulous attention to the interaction between the visual and the aural updates a central element of Hartman's interpretation of Wordsworth: the 'dialectics of the senses' that allows Wordsworth, with the help of nature, to subdue the overwhelming dominance of one of the senses – which, in Hartman's interpretation, still hampers the young Wordsworth's poetry – by allowing the other senses to temper the potentially traumatizing intensity of, in this case, the visual. Both in his work on the memory of trauma and on Romantic poetry, Hartman treats literary and artistic form as an integral part of sense perception; form modulates the interrelations between the senses, and Hartman's 'formalism' is then also a phenomenology that does not focus on form per se, but rather on the ways in which form shapes and reflects the subject's interaction with its world. Form, that is, is a medium that regulates the multifarious interactions between mind and world.

A second (and closely related) point is Hartman's consistent focus on the place that literary form plays in the life of the mind. This is most notable in a number of essays

from the 1970s where he coins the term 'psychoaesthetics' to refer to this aspect of his critical project. Literary form, for Hartman, can manage the disturbances that characterize the interanimation between mind and world. As we cannot count on a reciprocal attunement between the two, literature's 'psychic function' consists in 'either limiting a demand or reinforcing a potentiality of response' ('Dream' 174). The mediations of form can restore the balance between mind and world: not only can form temper the mind's at times excessive demands upon the world, it can also mediate the impact of an overwhelming or incomprehensible reality, whether that reality is the imperceptible changes wrought by industrialization (in the case of Romanticism), the horrors of genocidal violence (in the case of Holocaust memory) or the daily assault of televised images of violence (in contemporary culture). Indeed, formal mediation is necessary for liminal or excessive forms of experience to become intellectually and affectively accessible at all.

This brings us to a third crucial aspect of Hartman's 50-year long explorations of the cultural and psychological life of literary form: the question of how artistic mediations make it possible to register and experience historical realities that are not otherwise available to the senses or the intellect. This theme is especially prominent in Hartman's work on the visual mediation of the Holocaust. He warns that the techniques deployed in films threaten to provoke an outright dissociation between viewer and event (as in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* [1993]), or to invite a vicarious overidentification with the victims that similarly make the events unavailable for affective and intellectual uptake (as in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* [1985]). The theme recurs in his insistent reminder that the representation of traumatic events should avoid inducing so-called 'secondary trauma' – again, because such a vicarious thrill goes at the expense of a genuine appreciation of complexity and historical distance. The notion of a complex historical reality that does not fit extant categories and that only emerges through artistic mediation also informs his interpretation of Wordsworth, and notably his repeated readings of the two touchstones in his Wordsworth criticism, 'A slumber did my spirit seal' and the 'Boy of Winander' passage from *The Prelude*. Both poems address an experience of premature death, yet neither registers that loss in a way we can readily describe in our customary emotional vocabularies. Instead, Hartman observes a structural 'euphemism' in Wordsworth's poetry. This euphemism does not just refer to 'a figure of speech covering up naked truth', but rather to an underlying and resistant commitment to circumscribe (without betraying) a reality that resists foregrounding ('Interpreter's Freud' 148–53).

Hartman's theoretically and phenomenologically informed approach to Romantic poetry has often led to the assumption that he takes Romanticism out of history and the history out of Romanticism. While it is undeniable that his reading practices are singularly uninterested in identifiable historical events (i.e. the level of the *histoire événementielle*), his scrutiny of literary form has always investigated the ways in which the poetical mind relates to reality and to the forces of modernity. This investigation has recognized that historical relatedness often exists in modes that cannot be described as either affirmation or denial, but emerge as much more tenuous blends of cognitive and affective tonalities. Hartman's principled focus on literary form is always also a (phenomenological) exploration of the vulnerable reciprocal attunement between mind and world; and because this phenomenological concern, both in his work on Romanticism and on trauma, focuses on the way artistic form registers a hardly tractable sense of history that refuses to emerge as identifiable event, Hartman's alleged 'formalism' is better understood as an alternative to historicist paradigm than as a formalist rejection of it.¹ A number of recent books have recognized this central aspect of Hartman's work, and have demonstrated that the study of literary form can contribute to historical understanding.

Apart from the four books on which I focus below, David Simpson's recent book on Wordsworth deserves to be mentioned. Simpson's previous book on Wordsworth, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination* from 1987, which has long been recognized as one of the most impressive and nuanced new historicist approaches to that poet, already noted that Hartman's work, far from 'taking the poet out of history', offers the formal and psychological terms for the displacements that a historical method must investigate (19). His recent *Wordsworth, Commodification, and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity* (2009) is even more overtly indebted to Hartman's example. Like Hartman in his 1997 book *The Fateful Question of Culture*, Simpson presents Wordsworth as a poet of modernity, whose relevance extends until the present, and he does so by reading Wordsworth's near-systematic attention to spectral forms, border figures and images of death-in-life as a poetical way of registering momentous historical changes that the poet can neither fully understand nor successfully articulate. Simpson identifies these changes with the spectacular rise of the commodity form, and he demonstrates how Wordsworth's poetry responds to – rather than retreats from – phenomena of economic growth and mass mobilization. Particularly Hartmanian is Simpson's emphasis on the modality of Wordsworth's attention to historical change, which he identifies as a mode of 'concern': the word 'concern' in the subtitle, he writes,

intend[s] to capture the unresolved nature of the questions Wordsworth raises about suffering and sympathy. To be concerned usually means not having an answer, not having finished with an issue, being in a state of suspended attention that may produce a resolution but has not done so yet. (5)

The idea that poetry registers a sense of history that has not yet emerged into comprehension may be quite a change from new historicist doxa, but it is not for all that a departure from history.

3. *Form Without History: Hartman and the 'New Formalism'*

This renewed attention to literary form, and to the ways in which form allows history to register as affect rather than cognition, participates in two broader trends in Romantic studies that have already been mapped in this journal: the increasing attention to emotion and affect (Favret, 'The Study of Affect') and the return to prominence of literary form and the aesthetic (see Boyson). At the risk of reducing the complex distinctions between often very different approaches to form, I believe that Hartman's work and the recent studies that take up his legacy differ in some respects from what Marjorie Levinson has attempted to systematize as 'the new formalism'. As Levinson underlines, recent reappraisals of form not only polemically oppose the new historicism (either its methodology or its institutional authority), they also often do so by explicitly invoking the merits of the new criticism – achievements that the hegemony of historicist paradigms have supposedly displaced (Levinson 559, 563). Susan Wolfson, for instance, one of the leading figures in this return to form, clamors for the new criticism's 'commitment to close reading and its care for poetic form' in order to correct the new historicism's 'limited, even reductive accounts of how poetic texts perform' (*Formal Charges* 2); in its stead, she promotes what she calls 'the pleasures, intellectual and aesthetic, of attending to the complex charges of form in poetic writing' (1). While such 'a sophisticated yet unembarrassed sense of literary value—and pleasure' (Wolfson, 'Reading' 7) may superficially resemble a Hartmanian investment in affect, the key difference is that the books I turn to below locate affect in the operations of form they aim to describe, and not in their own critical practice.

Whereas many recent formalisms emphasize the affective dimension of reading, these studies locate affect – and, moreover, a much broader spectrum of affects than only pleasure and delight – as a dimension of the historical formal interventions they describe. They not only attend to form, but they also consider form as a complex mode of attending to the mixed blessings of historical life. They are, in other words, phenomenological rather than neo-new critical. Given the Hartmanian inspiration of these works, this recalls the fact that from the very beginning, Hartman's career has preferred a phenomenological orientation over the methods of the new criticism.

It is remarkable that Hartman's work serves as a crucial reference point for many new formalists. Wolfson, for instance, takes literally the title of Hartman's 1970 essay volume *Beyond Formalism*, and underlines that Hartman's ambition to move beyond formalism did, by his own admission, not imply a license 'not to study forms' (Hartman, *Beyond* 56; Wolfson, *Formal Charges* 2, 232; Wolfson, 'Reading' 6). Wolfson claims Hartman as a precursor to her enlarged sense of formalism by emphasizing how his long career has managed to engage questions of literary history and the literary imagination without ever surrendering his attachment to form. This is a useful reminder that Hartman's example also lives on in critical work that does not, like the books I discuss in the next section, actualize the historical perspective that his work makes possible (even if it has rarely actualized it itself).

In an interview, Hartman's longtime colleague Leslie Brisman has singled out Christopher Miller's *The Invention of Evening* (2006) as a masterpiece that reveals 'its author as the greatest Hartman heir of his age' (Hodgkins). The book explores Romantic poetry that deals with 'the threshold between day and night', a genre that, as Miller, notes 'has received fairly scant attention in Romantic criticism, with the notable exception of two essays by Geoffrey Hartman' (8).² Miller's close readings of the development of the evening poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats – as well as of their 18th-century prehistory and post-Romantic afterlife – is a self-conscious extension of Hartman's findings (8), which, as the book's subtitle ('Perception and Time in Romantic Poetry') makes clear, also borrows its methodological orientation from Hartman. Miller considers evening as a perceptual event, which comes close to the dialectic of the senses Hartman observed in Wordsworth, and which goes hand in hand with a singular experience of time. Evening is 'an occasion of perceptual adjustment, in which the faculty of vision yields to aural acuity and imaginative fancy or introspection' (9); by deploying evening as 'lyric form of perception, as verbal emblem of longing, and as privileged time of utterance and reflection' (180), evening poetry 'registers increments and lapses of time' (7). Studying evening as a Bakhtinian *chronotope*, the book mobilizes the legacy of Hartman to supplement 'M.H. Abrams' influential spatial model of the "greater Romantic lyric"' (6).

The Invention of Evening may very well be, as Leslie Brisman claims, 'the legacy of Geoffrey Hartman at its best', although the moment in Hartman's career to which it proves faithful is the decade starting with the publication of *Wordsworth's Poetry*, in which he published much of his authoritative work on Romantic poetry. Miller is, in other words, remarkably faithful to a mode of criticism that was not yet occupied with the challenges of psychoanalysis, deconstruction, or trauma. And even if Miller claims that the book is an 'implicit polemic' against historicist approaches, his 'claim that questions of form, genre, literary tradition, and aesthetic ambition continue to be worth asking' (10) is substantiated by the consistently high quality of his readings rather than by theoretical arguments. Indeed, the period of historicist hegemony that separate us from Hartman's and Abrams's groundbreaking critical work in the 1960s has hardly made an impression

on Miller. On the few occasions he does engage historicist readings head-on (notably of Coleridge's 'Fears in Solitude' and of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'), his revisions are in keeping with Hartman's legacy in that they show how the work of poetic form registers a sense of history that is irreducible to political or social terms, and that inflects all referential claims we may want to attribute to these poems. I now turn to four books that also take up that legacy, and that maintain a more sustained dialogue with present-day critical concerns.

4. *Phenomenality and Form*

Anne-Lise François' *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (2008) is an investigation of the way literary form registers a particular kind of experience that is not readily describable in our customary vocabularies. Unlike *The Invention of Evening*, and like the three other books I discuss along with François' Wellek Prize-winning book, it does not restrict itself to a discussion of the place of Romantic poetry in English literature history, but rather presents an ambitious comparative project that mobilizes a Romantic formal achievement as a quintessentially modern phenomenon. Unintimidated by traditional national and periodic boundaries (the texts discussed range from Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* over Wordsworth, Dickinson, and Hardy to *Mansfield Park*), her study focuses more on the historical and phenomenological dimensions of literary form than on literary history, and as such it takes on board the challenges of trauma, memory and history that have complicated Hartman's project – a debt François explicitly acknowledges – in the past three decades.

At the core of this book is a form of eventlessness and missed or 'uncounted' experience that is given shape in literature. The peculiar capacity of literary form is that it does *not* convert 'the latency of unactualized, dormant possibility' into experiences that 'count' or into well-circumscribed events, but rather manages to preserve this 'unused potential' as a "'more" absolute privation' (36–8). In the case of Wordsworth's 'A slumber', for instance, François, following Hartman and others, observes a 'double elision of event, first of any event of loss, then of any crying out to mark that loss' (168). The book focuses on experiences that remain 'below the threshold of representation and unavailable to discursive knowledge', a dimension that, she argues, 'is constitutive of experience itself' (51). While such 'nonemphatic', 'self-canceling' and 'non-epiphanic' revelations (xvi, 3, 43) do not feature on customary critical agendas, they do yield a minimally euphoric affect, which François, with characteristic circumspection, calls a 'minimal contentment' and an 'oddly satisfying reprieve or "letdown"' (xvii, xxi). Remarkably, and in spite of the wide range of her investigation, these features lead François to insist on the quintessentially 'romantic' status of these experiences; they are romantic '[i]nsofar as "romanticism" names, among other things, a protest against secular modernity's reduction of that which is to that which is capable of articulation, observation, representation, and reproduction' (124).

What connects *Open Secrets* to the other books discussed here and to the work of Hartman is its investment in experiences that decline customary expectations of articulation and productivity – expectations that share an insistence on actualization and that remain blind to the stunning sufficiency of unactualized possibility. While most of these studies deal with experiences that are too confusing or insistent to be adequately captured, François's study deals with experiences that are gracefully indifferent to articulation. In this way, François also elegantly chastizes the ethos of retrieval that informs most historicist research paradigms, and which too readily identifies latency as repression

or denial, rather than as a mode of underarticulation that is entirely appropriate to experiences and things that do not 'require either the work of disclosure or the effort of recovery' (xvi). Historicism's recovery work, that is, by insisting on the actualization of what literature preserves in its potentiality, misses a crucial if slight dimension of experience.

Open Secrets not only intervenes in contemporary debates on history and form, as the modes of 'nonappropriative contentment' it describes also attempt to offer an alternative to the absolutization of ethical and political demands that explicitly or implicitly inform much of contemporary literary criticism. In a pre-emptive gesture that recurs in the books discussed below, François refuses to promote the experiences she describes as a salient ethico-political position; instead, she underlines that her alternative to the logics of production and expression may at all times morph 'into its bad image—that of the quietist acceptance of the status quo' (267). Because of its uncertain ethico-political stakes, uncounted experience offers an escape from the 'infinite, never-to-be-satisfied ethical responsibility' that dominates much postmodern theory (xvii). In both theme and tone, *Open Secrets* is a remarkable update of Hartman's Romanticism.

Like François, Rei Terada's *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno* (2009) deploys Romanticism as a key term in a broader theoretical and comparative argument; again like François, it unearths an obliterated modality of modern experience. Terada traces what she calls 'a subterranean practice of phenomenophilia' (4). Phenomenophilia is a practice in which we 'look away' from a readily available phenomenal reality and instead focus on shadows, spectra, sunspots and other instances of 'transient perceptual objects' as a strategy for escaping from our default affirmation of reality (4). Phenomenophilia attaches itself to fleeting objects in order to escape from the assumption that we endorse whatever we do not loudly reject; it registers the wish to 'be relieved for a moment of the coercion to accept whatever one does not dispute' (3). *Looking Away* recalls us to experiences that remain imperceptible in theoretical positions that only recognize the twin options of affirmation and critique, and that remain blind to modes of dissatisfaction that are not immediately actualized as either of these. The book traces a 'romantic and post-romantic discourse of mere appearance' in Coleridge, Kant, Nietzsche and Adorno (3). This post-romantic tradition turns to appearance as a way of registering dissatisfaction because, Terada argues, they misconstrue Kant's insistence on the transcendental impossibility of not accepting the world as the imperative for an unconditional affirmation of the status quo (97). This overstatement of the Kantian challenge then inspires a set of aesthetic practices that aim to escape that default affirmation.

Terada's book, which never mentions the name of Hartman, updates the latter's emphasis on a 'dialectic of the senses' as a crucial element in the way aesthetic experience and form can help manage the ecology between mind and world. The attention to fleeting sensations counters the injunction of affirmation without confronting it with a revolutionary counterclaim. Like François (and like Hartman), Terada not only exposes the restrictiveness of our extant critical categories, she also explicitly warns us not to mistake the minor experiences she valorizes as carriers of a far-reaching ethico-political promise. Lingering with mere phenomenality is not a violent protest against the given, but rather a strategy to make time to withdraw from the commanding force of the world, and to encounter an alternative for what François calls the 'overemphasis on limitless responsibility and infinite debt' (François 61n88). Associated with 'mereness, lightness, radiance, and hypothesis', the practice of 'tarrying with phenomenality implies but never spells out mental reservation' (Terada 16, 18).

5. *Form as Medium*

While the books by François and Terada mostly rehearse the phenomenological dimension of Hartman's Romanticism, recent books by Kevis Goodman and Mary Favret tease out its historical charge. The title of Goodman's *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism* (2004) signals the double focus that is characteristic of the books discussed here, as well as of Hartman's work: the focus on a particular use of literary form – Goodman's main subject is the georgic poetry of Thomson, Cowper and Wordsworth – double-times as an analysis of a fundamental modern category. The 'georgic' has a double use for Goodman: not only is the afterlife of Virgil's *Georgic* in 18th- and 19th-century literature the book's main theme, the 'georgic' also names a particular conception of literary form that the poetry under discussion instantiates. Goodman's 'georgic' conception of literary form as a historical medium treats literary form not as a tool for the repression of historical reality that needs to be demystified, but as a medium shielding us 'against the possibility of sensory over-extension that shadows both the technologies of the new science and the territorial growth of nation and empire', while it *simultaneously* functions as an opening to history that 'disclos[es] the pressures it might seek to cover' (12). The georgic mode, that is, registers a 'historical presentness' that has not yet emerged as recognizable event or idea or even well-defined emotion, and as such it conveys 'a sensation of history as affective discomfort, cognitive "noise"' (3–4, 10). Literary form, that is, provides access to a modality of historical experience that refuses discursive articulation. The notion that form mediates the multifarious relations between mind and world, rather than afford an escape from them, actualizes Hartman's phenomenological account of form.

In what is the most remarkable recent update of Hartman's dialectics of the senses, literary form, for Goodman, registers history by intervening in the operation of the senses. Goodman identifies an 18th-century preoccupation with the potential dangers besetting the development of 'the microscopic eye', which threatens to overwhelm the senses and calls on defensive measures 'in the face of potential information overload' (55). This 'fantasy of perception heightened to a pitch of vulnerability' is the sensuous analogue of an increasingly inescapable exposure to the fall-out of imperialism, a burgeoning market economy, and an emerging culture of news with which poetry had to compete (106). The claim that William Cowper attempted to make this overwhelming reality of the news 'conversable' is reminiscent of Hartman's insistence that literary form is a necessary mediation in making a traumatic reality accessible, experienceable, and ultimately assimilable. By giving shape to a reality that is inaccessible to the intellect or the senses, form, instead of offering an articulation of experience, instead furnishes figures 'of expressive inarticulateness, and of the limits of lived experience' (97). The georgic mode constitutes a mode of thought 'that responds to the pressure of an eventful and information-laden present, one shaped by technological and territorial extension' (105). Far from suppressing history, then, and far from remaining silent in the face of reality, poetry – especially Wordsworth's – attempts to register 'muteness', 'to make muteness audible' (142). In this way, it registers the historical present while protecting the self from being overwhelmed by it. What Goodman offers, then, is a more historically acute description of the emergence of Wordsworth's euphemistic mode; her book bears witness to the insight that 'the production of the past' is a matter of 'the husbandry of the passions – and the management of distance' (114–5).

Goodman's book serves as a recurrent reference point in Mary Favret's *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (2010). The books share an interest in Cowper and in the culture of news, as well as in the ways in which poetical form

responds to the insistence of distant events that are not objects of direct experience. Like the other books on which I have focused, it deals with a situation in which representational adequacy is impossible, and in which form paradoxically manages to register that impossibility: the experience of wartime. As opposed to war, wartime names 'the experience of those living through but not in war'. It considers 'how war becomes part of the barely registered substance of our everyday' (9). Wartime is described as an experience situated between 'the polar pulls of abstractness and numbness'; neither invisible nor concrete, it is situated in a 'middle distance' that surfaces as (and because of) 'a poetic or aesthetic response, a response that strives to produce and give form to feeling' (10). Like Terada and François, Favret's meticulous readings underline the slightness, eventlessness and non-sublimity of the experience she traces. Wartime, that is, 'translates war from the realm of sublime event to an underlying situation or condition of modernity' (38). 'Deprived of the fortifications of intellect and understanding, deprived even of the immediacy of empirical evidence', the 'inhabitants' of wartime experience the everyday as an 'intensely felt eventlessness' (15–6, 38) – as what Favret theorizes as an 'affect' rather than a full-fledged 'emotion' (Favret, 'The Study of Affect').

As in the other three studies, Favret's book does not limit itself to a Romantic archive, and it seemingly effortlessly opens itself to (especially) contemporary theory. A review of all four of these books cannot dispense with what properly should have been said first – the fact that they are all remarkably well-written. They all offer sustained arguments that are entirely convincing by dint of their grounding in meticulous and patient readings of literary texts. Their virtuoso combinations of a focus on the phenomenology of form, of the relations between media and history, and of the role of form in the life of the senses qualify their (not very) different formalisms as profoundly akin to Geoffrey Hartman's Romanticism. Even if they all explicitly link their accounts of Romanticism to early-21st century concerns, all they claim for themselves is the right not to be forced to make a claim that can be recognized as a definable ethico-political stance. It is no rebuttal of their claims to observe that their remarkable potency echoes that of Hartman's unremarkable Wordsworth.

Short Biography

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Notes

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¹ The case for an alternative historicism that holds that history 'surfaces not only *in* but also *because* of an aesthetic medium that seals, sets some limit, to terror and makes representation possible' was made most cogently by Kevis Goodman in a 1996 article that was first published as part of a special issue of *Studies in Romanticism* dedicated to

Hartman, which in its turn served as a the basis for a 2005 volume entitled *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment* (Goodman, 'Making Time' 166; Elam and Ferguson). Together with a special issue of the *Wordsworth Circle* from 2006, edited by Marc Redfield, this volume offers the most authoritative contemporary assessments of Hartman's legacy. Goodman reiterates her claim for Hartman's alternative historicism in a review of Hartman's intellectual memoir, *A Scholar's Tale*. See Goodman, 'An Essay Review' 139–40.

² These essays are 'Evening Star and Evening Land' and 'Poem and Ideology: A Study of Keats's "To Autumn"' , both republished in *The Fate of Reading* (1975). Interestingly, this latter article has also been the occasion for Robert Kaufman's offhand attempt to enlist Hartman for the articulation in his own critical project of the work of Walter Benjamin and *Frankfurter Schule* aesthetics (especially Adorno) on the one hand and Romantic and contemporary poetry on the other. Kaufman underlines the affinities – remarked by Hartman himself – between his work and Adorno's insight that 'what a poem offers in terms of ideology or history is not so much about the poet's consciously held social perspective as it is about what Adorno had called "the poem as a philosophical sundial telling the time of history"' ('Red Kant' 691; also 'Social Lyric' 360–1). That Kaufman recognizes Hartman's concern with history is interesting, as Kaufman's work has also been connected to the new formalism.

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