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## Notes toward a Definition of Romantic Nationalism

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### Abstract

While the concept ‘Romantic nationalism’ is becoming widespread, its current usage tends to compound the vagueness inherent in its two constituent terms, Romanticism and nationalism. In order to come to a more focused understanding of the concept, this article surveys a wide sample of Romantically inflected nationalist activities and practices, and nationalistically inflected cultural productions and reflections of Romantic vintage, drawn from various media (literature, music, the arts, critical and historical writing) and

from different countries. On that basis, it is argued that something which can legitimately be called 'Romantic nationalism' indeed took shape Europe-wide between 1800 and 1850. A dense and intricately connected node of concerns and exchanges, it affected different countries, cultural fields, and media, and as such it takes up a distinct position alongside political and post-Enlightenment nationalism on the one hand, and the less politically-charged manifestations of Romanticism on the other. A possible definition is suggested by way of the conclusion: Romantic nationalism is the celebration of the nation (defined by its language, history, and cultural character) as an inspiring ideal for artistic expression; and the instrumentalization of that expression in ways of raising the political consciousness.

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