

2018

Wordsworth's "Illustrated Books and Newspapers" and Media of the City

Peter J. Manning
SUNY Stony Brook, peter.manning@stonybrook.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.library.stonybrook.edu/eng-articles>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

"Wordsworth's 'Illustrated Books and Newspapers' and Media of the City," *The Wordsworth Circle* 49 (1), Winter 2018, 10-19.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at Academic Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of English Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Academic Commons. For more information, please contact mona.ramonetti@stonybrook.edu, hu.wang.2@stonybrook.edu.

Wordsworth's "Illustrated Books and Newspapers" and Media of the City

Peter J. Manning
Stony Brook University

Wordsworth's 1846 sonnet "Illustrated Books and Newspapers" has gained notoriety as the prize exhibition, in the words of Gillen D'Arcy Wood, of the resistance of "the literary elite" to "the cultural influence of new visual media":

Discourse was deemed Man's noblest attribute,
And written words the glory of his hand;
Then followed Printing with enlarged command
For thought—dominion vast and absolute
For spreading truth, and making love expand.
Now prose and verse sunk into disrepute
Must lacquey a dumb Art that best can suit
The taste of this once-intellectual Land.
A backward movement surely have we here,
For manhood—back to childhood; for the age—
Back towards caverned life's first rude career.
Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page!
Must eyes be all in all, the tongue and ear
Nothing? Heaven keep us from a lower stage!

(*Last Poems, 1821-1850*)

"For Romantic writers," Wood continues, the illustrated book "symbolized the spread of an infantilizing visual medium" (173). Yet as Peter Simonsen replies, Wood's judgment is "too simple," in light of Wordsworth's suggestion in 1836 to Edward Moxon, his publisher, that illustrations be added to his poems (*LY* 3: 318)—the *Poems* of 1815 had already contained engravings by Sir George Beaumont—and the appearance in 1843 of an amply decorated *Select Pieces*, reprinted by Moxon with Wordsworth's encouragement in 1847.¹

The seeming intransigence of the sonnet nonetheless asks an explanation beyond the usual invocation of Wordsworth's conservatism. The pioneering illustrated newspaper was the *Illustrated London News*, which Herbert Ingram began to produce in May, 1842. As the prospectus for "No. 1 of A NEW WEEKLY JOURNAL," of which Ingram and the engraver and publisher Henry Vizetelly distributed a million copies, had declared in March, 1842, the newspaper was not as "dumb" or hostile to "prose" as Wordsworth's denunciation might lead one to believe:

Entitled The ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS,
Price Sixpence. Containing Thirty Engravings
Every Week of the Most Interesting Events of the
Day, in Addition to Forty-Eight Columns of News.
Engagements have been made with Artists of

Ability in Every Important Town in England and
in Paris and other places on the Continent.²

If the illustrations were the chief attraction of the new paper, the forty-eight columns of closely printed letterpress, three columns to a page, were not trivial. Frederick William Naylor Bayley, the paper's first editor, maintained in his address to the British Public on the front page of the first issue that "Art—as now fostered . . . has, in fact, become the bride of literature," and he affirmed that the paper would "associate its principle with a purity of tone that may secure and hold fast for our journal the fearless patronage of families; to seek in all things to uphold the cause of public morality, . . . and to withhold from society no point that its literature can furnish or its art adorn" (Bailey 208; 211).

The statement reveals the mixed feelings that the reliance on illustration in the paper inspired even among its own staff: association with the image raised the specter of mere sensationalism, to be counterbalanced by such high-minded pronouncements as this one. Yet the first issue was undeniably sensational: two pages of pictures of the Fancy Dress Ball given by Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace only two days before publication, and a front-page illustration, produced by enhancing an existing print borrowed from the British Museum, of a disastrous fire at Hamburg of which news had reached London only on May 10. Other stories included a Dreadful Railway Accident near Paris, an Awful Steamboat Explosion in America, War in Afghanistan, and Cases Heard at the Central Criminal Court.

This hodgepodge of topical news from around the world, of accidents, entertainments, and crimes, suggests that the target of the sonnet, the supersession of "Discourse" by the "dumb Art" of illustration, points to deeper discontents. Wordsworth's asperity was no doubt sharpened by his unhappy experience more than a decade earlier of publishing in the *Keepsake*, in which letterpress was deliberately subordinated to the plates of which the annual boasted (see Manning in Jordan and Patten). The visual seems less offensive *per se* than the miscellaneous nature of the news the paper collects. As for William Cowper and George Crabbe before him "the news" challenges the poet's capacity to absorb and assimilate.³ Despite the title of the sonnet I want to suggest that the illustrated book is not at issue, nor is the

image the primary target, at least not in the way a first reading of the sonnet suggests. For Wordsworth, as his commentary years before on his sonnet "With ships the sea was sprinkled" makes clear, the mind needs a single point of reference from which to organize and calm the pressure of an influx of impressions:

[W]ho is there that has not felt that the mind can have no rest among a multiplicity of objects, of which it cannot either make out one whole, or from which it cannot single out one individual, whereupon may be concentrated the attention divided or distracted by a multitude? After a certain time we must either select one image or object, which must put out of view the rest wholly, or must subordinate them to itself while it stands forth as a Head.

(May 21, 1807. *MY* 148)

In his poem "The Newspaper" of 1785 George Crabbe had already declared "Newspapers enemies to Literature" and denounced their "vapid sheets" (49):

A daily swarm, that banish every Muse,
Come flying forth, and mortals call them News:
For these, unread, the noblest volumes lie;
For these, in sheets unsoil'd, the Muses die;
(25-28)

William Cowper, in "The Winter Evening," Book IV of *The Task*, of the same year, is more detailed about the experience of reading the jumble of news and advertisements that characterized the newspapers:

Cataracts of declamation thunder here,
There forests of no meaning spread the page
In which all comprehension wanders lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there,
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion, roses for the cheeks
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean plunder'd of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons and city feasts and favourite airs,
Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katterfelto with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.
(72-86)

Cowper, sitting by his fire sipping tea, is enabled to contemplate the bustle of the world without being overwhelmed by it, fulfilling the desire "[t]o see the

stir / Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd, / To hear the roar she sends through all her gates / At a safe distance" (89-92). He preserves his "uninjured ear" (93) by "sitting and surveying thus at ease / The globe and its concerns" (94-95) in a verse that refigures the competing particulars of the newspaper—with the exception of the egregious Katterfelto⁴—into familiar type-narratives and satires. By this strategy Cowper, far from being overwhelmed, seems to himself "advanced / To some secure and more than mortal height, / That liberates and exempts me from them all" (95-97). From this secure vantage, the globe "turns submitted to my view, turns round / With all its generations; I behold / The tumult and am still" (98-100). Cowper presents himself "at home" (119) both in his cottage and in the world the newspaper enables him to draw into himself.

In contrast Wordsworth in "Illustrated Books and Newspapers" conquers the rush of news by repressing the contents of the news entirely: there are no particulars in the poem. That it is heterogeneity rather than the visual itself that oppresses him connects the denunciation of the sonnet to another dimension as well: not just the spatial form of the image but also the insistent chronological return of the newspaper, its perpetually renewed presence, its ever-repeated presentation of disconnected *faits divers*. The sonnet takes up again the cultural criticism of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* decades before:

[A] multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the encreasing [sic] accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.
(249)

The "thirst after outrageous stimulation" he had then condemned announced itself with greater force in a mass circulation national illustrated newspaper: by the end of 1842, the circulation of the *Illustrated London News* had grown to sixty thousand copies a week. For Wordsworth the combined effect of frequency and heterogeneity is to crowd out the space of "discourse."

At issue here, as the *OED* definitions disclose, is a tension in the meaning of discourse itself. Etymologically "discourse" derives from a. F. *discours*, ad. L.

discursus “running to and fro, conversation, discourse” (after *cours*: L. *cursus*), and is connected to such meanings as “onward course; process or succession of time, events, actions, etc.; = COURSE.” The *OED* characterizes this meaning as obsolete, but so it does a second meaning which we may assume was pertinent for Wordsworth, classically trained and saturated in Milton as he was: “The act of the understanding, by which it passes from premises to consequences’ [as Johnson’s Dictionary had it,] reasoning, thought, ratiocination; the faculty of reasoning, reason, rationality.” The tension between “running to and fro”—heterogeneity—and the organizing process of reason underlies Wordsworth’s denunciation of the scattering effect of the newspapers. The *OED* gives as the currently prevailing sense “a spoken or written treatment of a subject, in which it is handled or discussed at length; a dissertation, treatise, homily, sermon, or the like.” This weaker definition is also threatened by the newspaper as Wordsworth saw it. The sonnet speaks repeatedly in terms of extension: “enlarged command,” “dominion vast,” “spreading truth,” “making love expand.” The proprietors of the *Illustrated London News* might well have claimed that it was just such enlargement that they sought to promote through mass circulation; Wordsworth, on the other hand, understood such terms not primarily in terms of readership but in terms of intellectual comprehension, a comprehension impossible when multiple topics and illustrations were crammed into sixteen pages, to be succeeded the following week by a new array of topics and images. As Wordsworth continues explaining the logic of his sonnet to Lady Beaumont in the letter just quoted he develops a characteristic opposition:

‘Joyously it showed,’ this continued till that feeling may be supposed to have passed away, and a kind of comparative listlessness or apathy to have succeeded, as at this line, ‘Some veering up and down, one knew not why.’ All at once, while I am in this state, comes forth an object, an individual, and my mind, sleepy and unfixed, is awakened and fastened in a moment.

The ships “Veering up and down” in the sonnet, like the “running to and fro” of newspaper discourses, produces not mental activity for Wordsworth but a “sleepy and unfixed” mind or, in the sharper words of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, “savage torpor.” He there lamented that “the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves” to the “craving for extraordinary incident” fueled by modern “life and manners.” What the *Il-*

lustrated London News apprehends as stimulation, Wordsworth senses as distraction.⁵

There is some irony in Wordsworth’s having chosen the sonnet form to vent his dismay at illustrated newspapers, because the brevity of the sonnet made it seem to contemporaries the privileged genre for the impatient readers of an accelerating age. And it may also seem self-contradicting that Wordsworth should have placed his protest against miscellaneousness in the category of Miscellaneous Sonnets, as he did when he first published “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” in 1846. Before addressing these issues I should like to turn back to an earlier incident which may have contributed to Wordsworth’s animosity toward the *Illustrated London News*, while at the same time suggesting that his scorn had causes not merely personal.

On the death of Robert Southey in 1843 Wordsworth was offered, and prevailed upon to accept, the Laureateship. The *Illustrated London News* covered this event in its issue of April 15, 1843, accompanying the article with a portrait (Figure 1): “Here, reader, is his likeness.” Frances Blanshard describes the “portrait” (in scare quotation marks) as “a miserable woodcut from no known original, indeed not resembling any that we do know. . . . though recalling portraits of Milton”; a resemblance she clinches by also reproducing the frontispiece portrait of Jonathan Richardson’s *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton’s Paradise Lost* (1734) (Figure 2).⁶

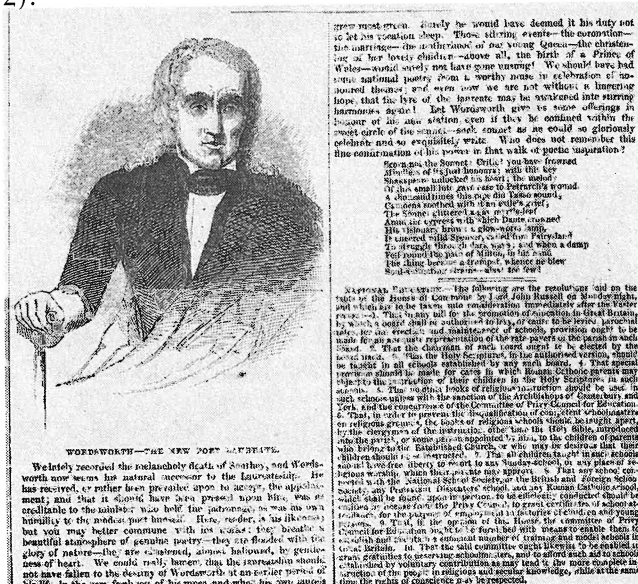


Figure 1. The New Poet Laureate
 Courtesy the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library



*Nectens aut Paphia Myrtil, aut Parnasside Lauri
 Fronde comas, at ego secura pace quiescam.
 J. R. sculpsit. MILTONI Manus.
 From an Excel. Orig. (Crayons) in his Collection.*

Figure 2. Jonathan Richardson drawing for frontispiece to his *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* (London 1734).

The *Illustrated London News* was probably drawn to “the Richardson head of Milton” by the discussion of it in Thomas De Quincey’s recent essays on Wordsworth in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* (1839):

Judge of my astonishment when, in this portrait of Milton, I saw a likeness nearly perfect of Wordsworth, better by much than any which I have seen, of those expressly painted for himself. The likeness is tolerably preserved in that by Carruthers, in which one of the little Rydal waterfalls, &c., composes a background [Plate 5 in Blanshard]; yet this is much inferior, as a mere portrait of Wordsworth, to the Richardson head of Milton; and this, I believe is the last which represents Wordsworth in the vigour of his power. (De Quincey 140–41)

Seeking an image for their article, the editors of the *Illustrated London News* appear to have grafted

a crudely modified version of the long-locked head of Milton from Richardson onto a torso in 19th century dress, adding an enfeebling cane (which appears in no other portrait of Wordsworth). As Blanshard notes, many readers of the newspaper might have seen Wordsworth in person; many readers might have known the Watt engraving of the Pickersgill portrait that appeared in the 1836 edition of Wordsworth’s poems, and again in the issues of 1840, 1841, 1842, and 1843. Well might the poet have felt, in the words of the sonnet, that the travesty constituted a “vile abuse of pictured page!” “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” could not have been what the editors hoped when in their article they urged Wordsworth to

give us some offerings in honour of his new station, even if they be confined within the sweet circle of the sonnet—such sonnet as he could so gloriously celebrate and so exquisitely write. Who does not remember the fine confirmation of his power in that walk of poetic inspiration?

If this speculation is correct, the aggravation of having been misrepresented in a widely-circulated portrait would have been magnified by its occasion. “*Tait’s*,” Grevel Lindop observes, “was a cheap magazine and an organ of Radicalism” (305). Worse: Wordsworth regarded De Quincey’s gossipy essays as an unforgivable violation of personal confidence. Henry Crabb Robinson remembered: “I was with Words. one day when the advertisement of one of his [De Quincey’s] papers was read. He said with great earnestness: ‘I beg that no friend of mine will ever tell me a word of the contents of these papers’ & I dare say he was substantially obeyed” (qtd. Jordan 346).

For De Quincey to have converted experiences based on friendship into salable articles for a journal was to drag the dignified poet into the commercial culture of personality and celebrity that he claimed to abhor; put less idealistically, it transferred control of his image from his own productions to another. The fraudulent “likeness” in the *Illustrated London News* was a literal repetition of the affront of De Quincey and *Tait’s*.

The pique is not merely personal, but points to the divergent views on the nature of truth held by the poet and the periodicals. The address on the first page of the first issue of the *Illustrated London News* declared: “The public will have henceforth under their glance, and within their grasp, the very form and presence of events as they transpire, in all their substantial reality, and with evidence visible as well as circumstantial.” “Vigorous illustration” was

held up less as an appealing innovation than as a monitor of reality more faithful than discourse: “if the pen be ever led into fallacious argument, the pencil must at least be oracular with the spirit of truth.”⁷ “Evidence visible” formed a crucial part of the mission of the *Illustrated London News* to become an object of reference and of the historical record: as Toni Weller has noted, the *Illustrated London News* “gave away ‘monthly wrappers’ . . . in which to bind issues, as well as ‘a title page and index’ at the end of each year to organize and structure the information contained within its pages” (203). The oversized bound biannual volumes in which the newspaper is now often found in libraries are an apt marker of the aspiration of the *Illustrated London News* to rise from the ephemera of the week to permanence, from newspaper to book.⁸ Such episodes as the tinkered plate of Hamburg in the first issue, not a picture of the fire at Hamburg but of Hamburg with fire added, or a “likeness” of Wordsworth cobbled from a portrait of Milton, a representation of which many readers of the newspaper would immediately perceive the falsity, thus called the veracity of “evidence visible” into question, and the integrity of the newspaper with it. More: De Quincey’s comparison of Wordsworth to Milton signifies not only a literal (and fortuitous) physical resemblance, but also insinuates a claim that De Quincey, despite his disappointment in Wordsworth the man, affirmed: that Wordsworth is a poet in the line of Milton, a claim at once on genealogy and on merit. To construe “likeness” as a matter of image alone is to raise a doubt whether the editors of the *Illustrated London News* knew how to *read*, in the sense that Wordsworth would have understood the term. From this perspective his question “Must eyes be all in all, the tongue and ear / Nothing?” looks less hyperbolic.

To place “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” under the catch-all heading of Miscellaneous Sonnets as Wordsworth did in 1846 would not suggest that position in a sequence will matter much to its interpretation and effect, were it not that all his life he was scrupulous about the organization of his poems. As he wrote to Henry Crabb Robinson while preparing the 1827 collected edition

Miscellaneous poems ought not to be jumbled together at *random*—were this done with mine the passage from one to another would often be insupportably offensive; but in my judgement the only thing of much importance in arrangement is that one poem should shade off happily into another—and the contrasts where they occur be clear of all harshness or abruptness—

(Letter of April 6, 1826. *LY* 1: 440)

Wordsworth followed “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” with the forceful contrast of “To Lucca Giordano,” making clear that it is the threat to philosophic contemplation that generates his anxiety, rather than the “dumb Art” of the visual itself:

Giordano, verily thy Pencil’s skill
 Hath here portrayed with nature’s happiest
 grace
 The fair Endymion couched on Latmos-hill;
 And Dian gazing on the Shepherd’s face
 In rapture,—yet suspending her embrace,
 As not unconscious with what power the thrill
 Of her most timid touch his sleep would chase,
 And, with his sleep, that beauty calm and still.
 O may this work have found its last retreat
 Here in a Mountain-bard’s secure abode,
 One to whom, yet a School-boy, Cynthia showed
 A face of love which he in love would greet,
 Fixed, by her smile, upon some rocky seat;
 Or lured along where green-wood paths he
 trod.

Rydal Mount, 1846

Wordsworth recounted his acquisition of the painting to William Boxall, who had painted his portrait in 1831 and decades later became Director of the National Gallery:

I don’t know whether you are acquainted with the works of Lucca Giordano—he is a clever painter. My son picked up at Lucca three large Pictures of his which now hang in my staircase, which they exactly fill. One is Vulcan presenting to Venus the armour he has forged for Aneas [*sic*], the other Diana hanging over Endymion on Mount Latmos, and the third, a scene from Ariosto or Tasso, of a Lady bending over her dead lover, who has been slain. These pictures cost John but little on the spot and I shall take care that he does not lose by the Purchase. They have cost me a good deal putting into order etc.

(May 21, 1846. *LY* 4: 781)

The provenance gave the picture a personal connection to the poet; its location made it a familiar daily presence, a constant of domestic routine as opposed to the ever varying, ever the same newspaper.

The mythological framework of the sonnet brings a transhistorical value that is the antipodes of the quotidian matter of the newspaper, and the contrast between this poem and the previous one runs deeper still. “Dian gazing on the Shepherd’s face / In rapture,—yet suspending her embrace” (4–5) is paradigmatic of absorbed contemplation, the suspension the opposite of the ships “veering up and

down” of “With ships the sea was sprinkled” or the “running to and fro” of the confusion of newspaper articles. Dian’s gaze is focused attention, the heightened “fasten[ing]” of the mind that produces the paradox of “calm and still” (8) mental activity. Dian gazes on Endymion as Wordsworth gazes on the portrait in its accustomed location, a parallel that equally models the kind of reading Wordsworth seeks for his poem.

Yet readers who are not familiar with the 17th century Neapolitan Baroque painter are likely to be surprised by the brilliant coloring and theatrical composition of Giordano’s work. *Diana and Endymion* by Giordano in the National Gallery, Washington, shows Diana with one nipple bare looming over the sleeping shepherd, the brilliant blue of her cape paralleling the brilliant red of his, setting off the pale flesh tones and the chiaroscuro of the background.⁹ The sestet surprisingly substitutes the youthful Wordsworth for Endymion: through the stability of the image the seventy-six year old “Mountain-bard” recovers a glimpse of his past self, moving the poem from the indoors of a “secure abode” (10) with a hint nonetheless of impending death in its figuration as a “last retreat” (9) to the pastoral pleasures of remembered “green-wood paths” (14). This unexpected pairing of the object of erotic desire with the elderly, philosophic “Mountain-bard” who emphasizes his current state by appending the date to his text seems to me not without wit. As he narrates it the picture preserves the older poet’s narcissistic image of himself: the young Wordsworth has revived through the tableau of intimacy he formed with Cynthia: “A face of love which he in love would greet” (11). The “unfixed” mind of Wordsworth’s commentary on “With ships the sea was sprinkled” is replaced with the erotic potential of “Fixed, by her smile” (13), and even the overtones of danger in “lured” (14) reassert the affectional energies of the aged poet laureate, and his physical motion too: the poem ends with the image of his walking along the forest paths.

The mediation of art, visual and verbal, invests the mythological figure of Endymion with personal significance, restoring the passionate youth to be found outdoors amid “rocky seat[s]” and “green-wood paths” rather than in Rydal Mount, already for decades an object of pilgrimage. The picture connects the poet both with his past self and with the next generation, the son who gave it to him. It counters the transient and distracting images of “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” with a stable and personally charged image, providing the secure shelter that memory alone does not; the object is not lost, but present to be encountered anew each day.

Stepping from “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” to the *ekphrastic* “To Lucca Giordano” one feels the difference in conceptions of the image and of reading: in the second poem reading is a vital exchange between the image, which completes itself in the responsiveness of the viewer/writer, and the writer who finds his inward likeness in the image of Dian and Endymion.¹⁰

For the edition of 1850 Wordsworth relocated “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” to the category of Poems of Sentiment and Reflection, a grouping that includes such meditative works as “The Two April Mornings” and “The Fountain: A Conversation,” as well as the “Ode to Duty” and the “Ode to Lycoris,” and placed it between the four linked sonnets that comprise “Personal Talk” and “To the Spade of a Friend,” juxtapositions that underscore the values of the sonnet.¹¹ “Personal Talk” reads like a crystallization of Cowper’s ingathering gestures:

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

(*The Task*, Book IV, 436–41)

As Kevis Goodman argues in the essay already cited, Cowper’s “loopholes of retreat” are not an isolating withdrawal—he is reading the newspaper—but the portals through which he looks out on the world from a position of security. Wordsworth’s withdrawal is more daringly privative; so far from hiding the perils of withdrawal, he foregrounds them. Recalling the etymological origin that suggests a counterplot in “Illustrated Books and Newspapers”—or perhaps one should say, “anticipating,” since that sonnet now follows *Personal Talk*—he declares that to “such discourse” as the mere “personal talk” of “friends . . . neighbours . . . chance-acquaintance” (3–5) he prefers “silence long, / Long, barren silence” (9–10). The repetition of “silence” seems to mark constancy, of the condition itself and of Wordsworth’s commitment to it, as a matter of desire and ethics both. In a figure that crosses from discourse to image Wordsworth confesses that “These all wear out of me, like Forms, with chalk / Painted on rich men’s floors, for one feast-night” (7–8). The figure joins trivia to transience: rejecting the “fits of sprightly malice” that those he stigmatizes as the “tribe” of “Our daily world’s true Worldlings” claim “but bribe / The languid mind into activity” (17–22) enables concentration and a countervailing intellectual adventurousness: “Wings have we,—and as far as we can go / We may find pleasure” (29–30). The ad-

dress in the first issue of the *Illustrated London News* had proclaimed: "Here we make our bow, determined to keep continually before the eye of the world a living and moving panorama of all its activities and influences." Against the moving and distracting world *Personal Talk* celebrates "The Poets" (53): "Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know / Are a substantial world" (33–34).

The contrast between book and newspaper enforced by the sequence acquires further character in the instances Wordsworth gives of the books in which he finds "personal themes, a plenteous store":

Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear;
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear,—
The gentle Lady married to the Moor;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.
(37–42)

(Note that the silence is filled by speaking books to which the now "voluble" reader "listen[s]"). In singling out Shakespeare's Desdemona and Spenser's Una, figures of embattled virtue, Wordsworth juxtaposes the active outward-looking perspective of the *Illustrated London News* to a feminized contemplativeness. The citation of Desdemona in this context is particularly striking, because it is Othello's misconstruction of the handkerchief that Iago offers him as the "ocular proof" (*Othello* III.iii.357) he demands of his wife's infidelity that destroys them both. "Illustrated Books and Newspapers" in its shifting contexts embodies a cardinal distinction in the modes of 19th century literacy, the distinction between extensive reading, a wide but shallow familiarity with a great variety of materials, and intensive reading, the concentrated return to a small number of cherished texts. At issue in the sonnet and its frames is the question whether the truth of the age is to be represented through "ocular proof," "evidence visible," or acts of sympathetic identification and sustained inwardness. In their own ways both poet and newspaper strove to record and comprehend their age.

In forecasting his vocation in the *Prelude* Wordsworth pledged himself to "making verse /

Deal boldly with substantial things" (1850, 13: 234–35). In Wordsworth's lexicon "substantial" stands against "change": a newspaper devoted only to picturing whatever is timely and topical this week sinks the visual into a "vile abuse" of the "pictured page" and destroys the contemplativeness of "this once-intellectual Land." Hence the importance to him of arranging the succession of even his miscellaneous sonnets to overcome any hint of mere momentaneity, integrating an individual text into a longer sequence. How much he distrusted "rapid communication," to recur to the language of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, can be seen in a late letter to Henry Crabb Robinson: "How comes it that you write to us so seldom, now that Postage is nothing [the uniform penny post had been introduced in January, 1840]. Letters are sure to be impoverished by the change, and if they do not come oftener, the gain will be a *loss*, and a grievous one too" (Letter of March 16, 1840. LY 4:49). Robinson relied upon his long friendship with Wordsworth to reply frankly, teasingly turning the poet's own words on him:

The answer is an obvious one, and you will give me credit for being quite sincere when I make it. It is but seldom that I dare to think that I have anything to say that is worth your reading. . . . Formerly, and even now in a slight degree, I used to be checked, both in writing and in talk, by the recollection of the four sonnets, so beautiful, and yet beginning so alarmingly—

I am not one who much or oft delight

To season my fireside with personal talk

. . . .

Now, after all, a letter—a genuine letter—is but personal talk. . . .

(Henry Crabb Robinson 1: 224–25)

Much as the "fireside" (2) and the "kettle" (14) of *Personal Talk* recall the inviting coziness of Cowper, and much as Robinson trusts that he has earned the privilege of entering Wordsworth's sanctuary, it is easy to share his sense that Wordsworth's scorn for the topical was "alarming," the egotistical sublime at its most self-enclosed and self-satisfied.

DEATH OF THE POET WORDSWORTH

In a rich forest of ferns and shrubs... The poet was born in 1770, as a peasant child in the village of...



RYDAL MOUNT, THE RESIDENCE OF MR. WORDSWORTH, FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING.

When Wordsworth was born in 1770, as a peasant child in the village of... The poet was born in 1770, as a peasant child in the village of...

The sonnet was written by the poet. It was first, far more than any other... The sonnet was written by the poet. It was first, far more than any other...

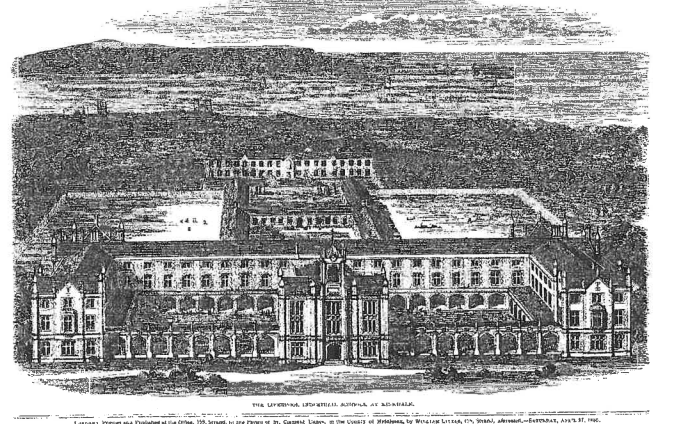
When the poet was born in 1770, as a peasant child in the village of... The poet was born in 1770, as a peasant child in the village of...

THE LIVERPOOL INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS AT KENNELCOTE

The meeting of this institution and connected building... The meeting of this institution and connected building...

The meeting of this institution and connected building... The meeting of this institution and connected building...

The meeting of this institution and connected building... The meeting of this institution and connected building...



THE LIVERPOOL INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS AT KENNELCOTE.

The Illustrated London News announced the death of Wordsworth on April 23 on the back page (296) of its issue of April 27, 1850 (Figure 3). The brief obituary is subordinate to a "View of the picturesque retreat of the lamented poet, at Rydal Mount," complete with gardeners scything the grounds at the rear of the house, which occupies the top center of the page (Matthews 155). The article ends with a cross-reference: "A portrait of Wordsworth appeared in No. 50 of our Journal." However spurious this particular portrait, the gesture, as Weller points out, typifies the ambition of the newspaper to achieve documentary status. The only other article on the page concerns The Liverpool Industrial Schools, opened in May, 1845, in an attempt to offset a growing "juvenile pauperism" in the city. The institution currently housed 1,123 poor children, offering basic, religious, and vocational education at an "annual cost to the parish" of "£10,483 1s. 9d." At the bottom of the page and spreading all across it is an engraving of the massive building, its wings extending well beyond the scene of Rydal Mount above it, just as the text of the article far ex-

ceeds that of the obituary of the poet, wrapping around and framing the image of his home. The fortuitous conjunction of this example of Victorian social engineering with an obituary for the poet of an often solitary childhood in nature, "Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (1850 Prelude, 1: 307), open to the interplay of accident and providence, and recuperating error by the retrospective power of interpretation, might seem exactly the sort of jumble against which Wordsworth inveighs in "Illustrated Books and Newspapers." This unremarked contrast uncannily repeats the temporal coincidence in No. 50 that placed the summary of a bill on national education next to the announcement that Wordsworth, who had declared to his patron Sir George Beaumont "Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing" (February 20, 1808. MY 1:195), had received the laureateship (see Figure 1). The juxtapositions may also be seen as an unintended but luminous paradigm of the significant Victorian cultural debate that the sonnet and the newspaper enact, which we may read without succumbing either to Wordsworth's vilification of illustrated books and newspapers or of the prevailing contempt for the conservatism of his old age.

Notes

Research for this essay was begun in a year as a Fellow of the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Iowa. I owe more than I can here acknowledge to the Director of the Center, Jay Semel, the colleagues with whom I shared my time there, and the resources of the University.

¹Simonsen 30-31; see also 174. Simonsen cites (193 n. 41) the suggestion of Mark L. Reed that the sonnet might have been "kindled partly by this collection of his own poetry" (71), but Reed's account seems to me to support a contrary interpretation. The 1843 publication by James Burns had not been fairly authorized by Wordsworth, but when Moxon brought out a legitimate revision in 1847 with still more vignettes Wordsworth took two dozen copies for himself; a new printing followed in 1854. The total number of copies ran to seven thousand, and Wordsworth and his heirs earned over £375 from the venture.

²"The Early History of *The Illustrated London News*." Weedy: *Illustrated London News* web site.

³On Crabbe's protest against the "variety of dissociating articles which are huddled together in our Daily Papers" (*Poetical Works* 2:111) see Ellison. Her nuanced distinction between the responses of Crabbe and Cowper to the newspapers should be read with Goodman.

⁴Gustavus Katterfelto was a Prussian quack doctor and conjurer who took advertisements in the newspapers headed “Wonders! Wonders! Wonders!”

⁵The description in the *Prelude* of Bartholomew Fair is the *locus classicus* of this anxiety in Wordsworth: “Oh, blank confusion! true epitome / Of what the mighty City is herself, / To thousands upon thousands of her Sons, / Living amid the same perpetual whirl / Of trivial objects, melted and reduced / To one identity, by differences / That have no law, no meaning, and no end” (1850, 7: 722–28).

⁶The *Illustrated London News* article appears on 259 of the issue of April 15, 1843. I quote from Blanshard 93; she reproduces the two images as Plates 24b and 19b; I have sought out the original publications. In her caption to 19b Blanshard cites De Quincey, but without quotation or commentary.

⁷For a careful reading of this program see Sinnema.

⁸On the genre crossing of the *Illustrated London News* see Houfe:

Its format was entirely that of the newspaper and yet its appearance in two cloth-bound volumes at the end of the year, blind-stamped decoration at the corners, gilded cypher in the middle, gave it an air of permanence. This was not something to be discarded like a newspaper, but kept on the table in view of visitors, to be pored over like an album. There was much of the album in these volumes. . . . (71–72)

⁹The image may be found through the museum website: www.nga.gov. There is a Giordano of *Venus Giving Arms to Aeneas* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, searchable at that website: www.mfa.org. It is intriguing to speculate that the paintings in these American collections might once have been Wordsworth’s, but the matter is tangled. At the auction of Wordsworth’s library in July 1859 following the death of the poet’s wife the last item of the second day was a “fine gallery picture . . . a capital specimen of the Neapolitan School, by one of its most consummate Masters—Lucca Giordano,” *Vulcan presenting to Venus the armour for Mars*, which I take as a misdescription of *Venus Giving Arms to Aeneas*. The catalogue dryly notes “For which no one bid” (Munby). The paintings are no longer at Rydal Mount, and neither Marian Elkington, the curator, nor Jeff Cowton, curator of The Wordsworth Trust at Dove Cottage (which never held the paintings) knows of their whereabouts. Anne Halpern of the Department of Curatorial Records, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., and Victoria Reed,

Monica S. Sadler Assistant Curator for Provenance, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, have been extraordinarily generous in pursuing the possible connections between the holdings of their institutions and Wordsworth, but so far no links have been established. There are gaps in the provenance; Giordano was a prolific painter who produced multiple versions of these subjects; attributions shift. Perhaps this essay will reach someone with the missing information.

¹⁰Cf. Shackford, who argues that Wordsworth distinguished between “mere illustrators who lure readers away from ‘discourse,’ intellectual activity, and exchange of ideas” and “the power of creative visualization, so essential in intelligent appreciation” (71).

¹¹I have written on *To the Spade of a Friend* in *Reading Romantics* 244–54.

Works Cited

- Bailey, Isabel. *Herbert Ingram Esq. MP*. Kay, 1996; Blanshard, Frances. *Portraits of Wordsworth*. Allen, 1959; Cowper, William. *The Works of William Cowper*. 15 vols. London: Baldwin, 1835–37; Crabbe, George. *The Poetical Works of the Rev. George Crabbe: with his letters and journals, and his life*. 8 vols. Murray, 1834; De Quincey, Thomas. *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*. Ed. David Wright. Penguin, 1970; De Selincourt, Ernest, ed. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, II, The Middle Years, Part I, 1806–1811*. Rev. Mary Moorman. 2nd ed. Clarendon, 1969; —. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, III, The Later Years, Part I, 1821–1828*. Rev. Alan G. Hill. 2nd ed. Clarendon, 1978; —. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, VII, The Later Years, Part IV, 1840–1853*. Rev. Alan G. Hill. 2nd ed. Clarendon, 1988. Print; Ellison, Julie. “News, Blues, and Cowper’s Busy World,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 62 (2001): 219–37; Goodman, Kevis. “The Loophole in the Retreat: The Culture of News and the Early Life of Romantic Self-Consciousness,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2003): 25–52, revised, in Chapter 3 of her *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*. Cambridge UP, 2004; Houfe, Simon. *The Dictionary of 19th Century British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists*. Antique Collectors Club, 1978; Jordan, John E. *De Quincey to Wordsworth*. U of California P, 1963; Lindop, Grevil. *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey*. Dent, 1981; Manning, Peter J. *Reading Romantics*. Oxford UP, 1990.—. “Wordsworth in the Keepsake, 1829,” *Literature in the Marketplace*. Ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten. Cambridge UP, 1995; Matthews,

Samantha. *Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves, Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford UP, 2004; Munby, A. N. L. *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, vol. 9, *Poets and Men of Letters*. Ed. Roy Park. Mansell, 1974; Reed, Mark L. "Wordsworth's Surprisingly Pictured Page: *Select Pieces*," *Book Collector* 46 (1997): 69–92; Robinson, Henry Crabb. *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*. Ed. Thomas Sadler. 2 vols. Macmillan, 1872; Shackford, Martha Hale. *Wordsworth's Interest in Painters and Pictures*. Wellesley P, 1945; Simonsen, Peter. *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts*. Palgrave, 2007; Sinnema, Peter W. *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the Illustrated London News*. Ashgate, 1998; Weedy, John, ed. *The Illustrated*

London News. <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y8ccnuew> (Accessed January 25, 2007). Weller, Toni. "Preserving Knowledge Through Popular Victorian Periodicals: An Examination of *The Penny Magazine* and the *Illustrated London News*," *Library History* 24 (2008): 200–07; Wood, Gillen D'Arcy. *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture 1760–1860*. Palgrave, 2001; Wordsworth, William. *Last Poems, 1821–1850*. Ed. Jared Curtis. Cornell UP, 1999; Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. Norton, 1979; Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads*. Ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. Methuen, 1968.

Victorian Illustrations of Romantic Poetry

Tom Mole

University of Edinburgh

For a while, it seemed that the Romantics would not be remembered at all. Many early-Victorian commentators worried that the writing of the recent past no longer compelled readers' interest, and that it would soon be forgotten. The *Quarterly Review* asserted that Scott was "in danger of passing – we cannot conceive why – out of the knowledge of the rising generation" (Anon, review of Lockhart, 1), and Thomas Carlyle cautioned in 1829 that "Byron [. . .] with all his wild siren charming, already begins to be disregarded and forgotten" (78). Orestes Brownson asserted in 1841 that Shelley was "seldom spoken of and much more seldom read" (Barcus, 380). *The Graphic* cattily remarked in 1873 that Hemans was "almost as much neglected now, as she was overrated formerly" (Anon, review of Hemans, 16). Stopford Brooke declared simply in 1893 that Byron was "not much read now" (36). If no one made an effort to renovate Romantic writing for new generations of book buyers, it might be forgotten altogether.

This concern produced a corresponding need for the images, lives and works of Romantic authors to be mediated 19th century readers in new ways. Even as they insisted on their difference from the past, later 19th century writers, artists and commentators were also fascinated by the possibility of reviving it. In this paper, I want to suggest that illustrated books offered a powerful tool for undertaking this renovation project. I focus on what I will call retrofitted illustrations: that is, new illustrations

produced for works that initially appeared without illustrations.

New books that appeared with illustrations from their first publication became more common in the Victorian period, produced either by a single artist working in two media, such as William Thackeray, Edward Lear, or Beatrix Potter, or by collaborators such as Charles Dickens and Hablot K. Browne (Phiz), or Lewis Carroll and John Tenniel. Serial publication (as in the case of Dickens) also lent itself to illustration, with one or two images appearing with each number, which were then reprinted when the numbers were reissued as a volume. Of course, the Romantic period had illustrated books too. William Blake, Henry Fuseli, J.M.W. Turner and other artists produced many illustrations for others' works, while projects like Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and Fuseli's Milton Gallery combined gallery exhibitions of paintings with the sale of engraved prints and the subscription publication of illustrated editions (Friedman, Burwick, Rovee, Calè). However, very few canonical Romantic works appeared with illustrations when first published, with the obvious exception of Blake's illuminated books. Even the Waverley novels, which were illustrated in reprint editions, including the Magnum Opus edition, all appeared without illustrations on their first publication.

In the Victorian period, there were not only more illustrated books in circulation than ever