

ROMANTIC TEXTUALITIES
LITERATURE AND PRINT CULTURE, 1780–1840



Issue 19
(Winter 2009)

Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research
Cardiff University

Romantic Textualities is available on the web @ www.cf.ac.uk/encap/romtext

ISSN 1748-0116

Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840, 19 (Winter 2009). Online: Internet (date accessed): <www.cf.ac.uk/encap/romtext/issues/rt19.pdf>.

© 2009 Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research

Published by the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research, Cardiff University.
Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro 11 / 12.5, using Adobe InDesign CS4; images and illustrations prepared using Adobe Illustrator CS4 and Adobe PhotoShop CS4; final output rendered with Adobe Acrobat 9 Professional.

Editor: Anthony Mandal, *Cardiff University, UK*

Associate Editor: Tim Killick, *Independent Scholar*

Reviews Editor: Nicola Lloyd, *Cardiff University, UK*

Advisory Board

Peter Garside (Chair), *University of Edinburgh, UK*
Jane Aaron, *University of Glamorgan, UK*
Stephen Behrendt, *University of Nebraska, USA*
Emma Clery, *University of Southampton, UK*
Benjamin Colbert, *University of Wolverhampton, UK*
Edward Copeland, *Pomona College, USA*
Gavin Edwards, *University of Glamorgan, UK*
Gillian Dow, *University of Southampton / Chawton House Library, UK*
Caroline Franklin, *University of Swansea, UK*
Isobel Grundy, *University of Alberta, Canada*
David Hewitt, *University of Aberdeen, UK*
Gillian Hughes, *Independent Scholar*
Claire Lamont, *University of Newcastle, UK*
Robert Miles, *University of Victoria, Canada*
Rainer Schöwerling, *University of Paderborn, Germany*
Christopher Skelton-Foord, *University of Durham, UK*
Kathryn Sutherland, *University of Oxford, UK*

Aims and Scope: Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is an online journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality, and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists, and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. As of Issue 15 (Winter 2005), *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality, and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

Peter Simonsen, *Wordsworth and the Word-Preserving Arts: Typographic Inscription, Ekphrasis and Posterity in the Later Work* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), x + 216pp. ISBN 978-0-2305-2481-1; £48 / \$85 (hb).

THE ARGUMENT OF THIS BOOK IS THAT WORDSWORTH'S LATER POETRY FOCUSES less upon nature and the poet's inner self, more upon the visible external world, the visual arts and the visual appearance of his own poetry in print. He became less 'a man speaking to men' and more a man writing for posterity. Or rather he became, in collaboration with printers and engravers and publishers, a man printing for posterity. A late manifestation of this tendency was the engraving of Frances Chantrey's very Roman stone bust of Wordsworth which he used as the frontispiece for his 1845 *Poems* and which is reproduced on the front cover of Peter Simonsen's book. Permanence, Simonsen suggests, remained a fundamental value for Wordsworth throughout his writing life but in his later work it was to be found rather less in nature and rather more in art.

The common view that Wordsworth's poetry declined in quality after the *Poems, in Two Volumes* of 1807 is a result, Simonsen believes, of our failure to understand what he was really trying to achieve in his later work. In making this argument he fully acknowledges the many recent studies of Wordsworth's ekphrastic and inscriptional poetry and the increasing critical recognition of that there was a 'turn to the visual' in British culture. Jerome McGann for instance has claimed that after 1820 'artists and writers gradually developed a new and extraordinarily sophisticated understanding of the expressive character of physical text.' By putting Wordsworth's poetry in this wider context, and by supporting his argument with some rigorous close reading, Peter Simonsen succeeds in making Wordsworth's later poetry much more interesting than many of us had realised.

Typographic inscription and ekphrasis are related aspects of the turn to the visual and while the chapter titles of Simonsen's book suggest a separation of the two the actual argument moves constantly, and deftly, from the one topic to the other. Thus *Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems* (1835) has a chapter to itself as 'The Book of Ekphrasis' but a poem from that volume, 'Inscription' (a poem without a title in later editions), is also at the centre of the chapter on 'Typographic Inscription'.


The analysis of 'Inscription' and of another *Yarrow Revisited* poem, 'Lines Suggested by a Portrait from the pencil of F. Stone', demonstrate just how close the themes of ekphrasis and inscription can be. The 'grey line' mentioned in 'Inscription' refers both to the path or line left on the hillside by the composing poet as he walks and to the line of verse which is left, more permanently, on the printed page. In 'Lines Suggested by a Portrait', the word 'Lines' in the title is repeated as 'line' within the poem, as it had been thirty-seven years earlier in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey.' But while the pun in 'Tintern

Abbey' had linked poetry to nature ('these hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines | Of sportive wood run wild'), the pun in the later poem links poetry to the line of paint in a portrait ('A silver line that runs from brow to crown | And in the middle parts the braided hair'). The permanence which the poem hopes to assimilate belongs in the later poem not to nature but to art, the pun signifying 'the plastic fixity conferred upon song by its representation in the materiality shared by printing and painting'.

It is in fact not always quite clear, either in Wordsworth or in Simonsen, to what extent the distinction between handwriting and print is important. Nevertheless, some of Simonsen's suggestions about the meaning of specific typefaces in the later poetry are persuasive. He has interesting things to say about the use of blackletter or 'gothic' type in *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815) and about the resetting of the final poem of the *River Duddon* sonnets (1820) in italic for the five-volume collected edition of 1827 (where the poem's title is also changed, from 'Conclusion' to 'After-Thought').

My only regret here is that so little attention is paid to the quite heavy use of capital letters in the later poems, for instance in 'After-Thought'. The distinction between upper and lower case is a feature of 'the visual language of typography' quite as important as the distinction between roman and italic. If, as Simonsen argues, what has been called 'the general typographic revolution at the close of the eighteenth century' enabled Wordsworth to use italic as a precision instrument, perhaps it did the same for his use of capitals. And if so, it would make Hazlitt's description, in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) of early Wordsworth as a 'levelling' poet particularly intriguing since the levelling which Hazlitt had in mind was, among other things, typographic: 'capital letters were no more allowed in print than letters-patent of nobility were permitted in real life.'

Hazlitt does play important role in Simonsen's book, making his first appearance in a chapter on Wordsworth's collaboration with his patron, the landscape painter Sir George Beaumont at Coleorton. We are reminded of Hazlitt's formulation of the change from early to late Wordsworth as a change from the levelling to the 'classical and courtly', to poems which 'seem to have been composed not in a cottage at Grasmere, but among the half-inspired groves and stately recollections of Cole-Orton'.

The entry of Hazlitt's political aesthetics into the book has a bracing but slightly destabilising effect on its argument. There is a shift from seeing the early Wordsworth as a poet of nature and the self to seeing him as a poet of nature, the self and society; a shift of allegiance, we could say, from Hartman to Hazlitt. But then it may not be possible to track the changes from early to late Wordsworth without, to some degree, changing your own vantage-point as you do so. 

Gavin Edwards
University of Glamorgan

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



Benjamin Colbert is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Wolverhampton. His main areas of interest are travel writing and satire, and his publications include vol. 3 of Pickering & Chatto's 'British Satire, 1785–1840' series: *Complete Longer Satires* (2003) and *Shelley's Eye: Travel-Writing and Aesthetic Vision* (2005). He is also the Reviews Editor for the *European Romantic Review* and has co-edited with Glyn Hambrook a special issue of *Comparative Critical Studies*, entitled 'Literature Travels' (2007).

Gavin Edwards is Professor of English Studies at the University of Glamorgan, Wales. His research focuses on Romantic literature and society, and historical applications of narrative theory and semantics. He is the editor of *George Crabbe: Selected Poems* (1991) and *Watkin Tench: Letters from Revolutionary France* (2001), and the author of *Narrative Order, 1789–1819: Life and Story in an Age of Revolution* (2005). He is currently working on capital letters in the novels of Dickens.

Porscha Fermanis is a lecturer in Romantic and eighteenth-century literature at University College Dublin. Her research interests include Enlightenment history and philosophy, as well as Romantic-era poetry, historical fiction, and historiography. Her book, *John Keats and the Ideas of the Enlightenment*, will appear with Edinburgh University Press in late 2009.

Peter Garside is an Honorary Professorial Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. He has recently edited Walter Scott's *Waverley* (2007) for the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels, and was the Project Director of the online database *Illustrating Scott* (2009).

Richard Hill completed his PhD at Edinburgh University in 2006, and is now teaching English at the University of Hawaii, Maui Community College. His thesis was entitled 'The Illustration of the Waverley Novels in Scotland: Walter Scott's Contribution to the Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Novel'. He has written articles on Scott, Hogg, and book illustration, and is currently working on the lifetime illustrations of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Ceri Hunter is a DPhil student at Oxford University. Her thesis examines the literary and cultural meanings of cousin love in the nineteenth-century novel. She teaches in the field of Victorian literature and has previously published in the *George Eliot Review*. Ceri completed her MA in English at Cardiff University in 2005, where she also developed interests in women's fiction and Welsh writing in English.

Markus Poetzsch is Assistant Professor of English at Wilfrid Laurier University, in Waterloo, Canada, where he specialises in British Romantic literature. His recent publications include *'Visionary Dreariness': Readings in Romanticism's Quotidian Sublime* (2006) and his current research is focused on the intersections of pedestrianism, imagination, and memory in the literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

John Pruitt is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Rock County. His publications on literature and on teaching and learning have appeared most recently in *Currents in Teaching and Learning*, *Library Quarterly*, and *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*.

Don Shelton is a collector, researcher, and writer on miniature portraits from Auckland, New Zealand. His collection includes over 800 miniature portraits which, together with his research notes, can be viewed at <http://portrait-miniature.blogspot.com>. He finds research into sitters such as Sir Anthony Carlisle fascinating, and is frequently surprised at how much information can be gleaned via dedicated Internet research.

Maria Paola Svampa is a PhD Student at Columbia University. She specialises in nineteenth-century and Romantic poetry, and her chief interests are stylistics, prosody, and comparative approaches to literature. She has written about Letitia Landon and Arthur Hugh Clough. Her recent research has focused on intertextuality and the bourgeois culture of tourism in the literary annuals.

