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THE 1798 *LYRICAL BALLADS* AND THE POETICS OF LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOOK PRODUCTION

BY ALAN D. BOEHM

Although the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* has generated myriad critical studies, which reflect various historical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives, few readers have contemplated the first edition as a locus of late eighteenth-century printing and publishing practices, and none have examined the commercial considerations that urged the poets and their bookseller, Joseph Cottle of Bristol, to produce the particular book they did. This lack of attention is not very surprising. Readers of literature tend to concentrate their energies on the texts authors write, not on such matters as the type and paper deployed in their reproduction. But the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* invites such scrutiny, because for Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* was as much a publishing venture that engaged their knowledge of the contemporary literary marketplace as a volume of poems that disclosed their aesthetic ideas, a fact signalled by the very title the poets assigned to their book.[1]

As a printed artifact, the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* has not escaped scholarly notice. It has been the focus of several bibliographic and textual studies—chiefly, those by Thomas J. Wise, D. F. Foxon, Robert W. Daniel, James A. Butler, and Butler and Karen Green.[2] These works explain how the 1798 edition was printed and published. However, they are not concerned with why Cottle, Wordsworth, and Coleridge produced the book in the way they did, what the book's material features might have meant to the poets and their bookseller, and what the book was intended to signify to readers of 1798, who would hopefully pick it up among dozens of other books in a shop, buy it, and read it with pleasure. But in exploring how, with Cottle's cooperation, Wordsworth and Coleridge translated their manuscript poems into the print commodity, *Lyrical Ballads, with a few other poems*, we not only gain a better understanding of the collection itself, but we also sense the need to begin re-examining some of our basic notions about the nature of Romantic authorship.

Because the appearance of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 followed a series of complicated and at points elusive events, it is helpful to briefly outline its publishing history, placing an emphasis on the material production of the book. As a publishing venture, *Lyrical Ballads* came into being towards the end of May 1798, when Cottle paid a short visit to Nether Stowey and Alfoxden, and reached an agreement with Wordsworth and Coleridge to issue a one-volume edition of poetry and give the poets 30 guineas for the copyright.[3] During this visit the bookseller and the poets established some preliminary ideas about the way the book would be printed and published, and around May 30 Cottle returned to Bristol with manuscript copies of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" and perhaps other poems, which he soon delivered to his printer, Nathaniel Biggs. On 4 June Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote a letter to Cottle that clarified the scope of the project, reviewed the preliminary production plans, and discussed some new pro- duction ideas. This is the only extant document of the time that records in detail the poets' printing and publishing instructions.[4] Around this date additional letters addressing the volume's commer- cial character may have passed between the poets and the bookseller, or a meeting between Coleridge and Cottle may have taken place.[5] But after some point in June any decisions concerning the material form of *Lyrical Ballads* were probably worked out by Cottle and Wordsworth alone, who spent a good deal of time in Bristol from June to August. By early September, 500 copies of *Lyrical Ballads* in a foolscap octavo edition of 210 pages, neatly printed on good wire- wove paper, were ready for publication. But for reasons that he never clearly explained, Cottle suddenly declined to publish *Lyrical Ballads* and looked about for a London bookseller to buy and issue the edition. First he tried to sell it to T. N. Longman of Paternoster Row, even preparing a title page with Longman's imprint, but Cottle and Longman apparently reached no agreement. Then Cottle sold the edition—just as Wordsworth was separately arranging publica- tion with Joseph Johnson of St. Paul's Churchyard—to John and Arthur Arch of Gracechurch Street, who ushered *Lyrical Ballads* into its public existence in late September, at a price of five shillings in plain paper boards.

A closer examination of these events reveals that Wordsworth and Coleridge exerted considerable influence over the material produc-

tion of *Lyrical Ballads*. Although Cottle, the volume's financier and the owner of its copyright, was entitled to issue *Lyrical Ballads* any way he wished, at nearly every stage in the volume's production he accommodated the poets' ideas—including some very specific ones—about how *Lyrical Ballads* would be printed and published. For example, the arrangement of the collection betrays underlying ordering principles, which were devised by both poets or by Wordsworth alone, and carried out by Cottle.[6] But there is nothing unusual about the poets ordering their verse, and numerous examples could be cited to indicate that booksellers gave authors a free hand to organize their work.[7] A more telling instance of Cottle's acquiescence to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's production decisions is the title page the poets originally planned for *Lyrical Ballads*, which would have announced something along the lines of "Lyrical Ballads, with a few other poems. Bristol: Printed by Nathaniel Biggs for Joseph Cottle." According to Cottle, details of the page—the title and the omission of the poets' names—were established during his visit to Alfoxden and Nether Stowey.[8] By the customs of the publishing industry, book titles were generally an author's prerogative, but the volume's anonymity was another matter. In an age when anonymous publication comprised a familiar if not overused marketing ploy, Wordsworth's and Coleridge's decision to withhold their names from the title page was a decision of some consequence. Cottle evidently resisted the tactic, for the poets' letter of 4 June contains a justification for the anonymity of *Lyrical Ballads*. "As to anonymous Publications," Coleridge writes, "depend on it, you are deceived.—Wordsworth's name is nothing—to a large number of persons mine *stinks*—The Essay on Man, Darwin's Botanic Garden, the Pleasures of memory, & many other most popular works were published anonymously" (*CL*, 412).

The poets also had a strong voice in the typography of *Lyrical Ballads*, although Cottle undoubtedly had a say in this area of production, for as a bookseller his knowledge of typography was more extensive than that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Yet the poets imposed their own notions of typography on Cottle, and the printed *Lyrical Ballads* reflects their ideas. In the letter to Cottle, Wordsworth and Coleridge insisted on specific typographic qualities for their book:

> I meant to have written you an Essay on the Metaphysics of Typography; but I have not time.—Take a few hints without the

abstruse reasons for them with which I mean to favor you—18 lines in a page, the lines closely printed, certainly *more closely* than those of the Joan (Oh by all means closer! W. Wordsworth), *equal ink; & large margins*. That is *beauty*—it may even under your immediate care mingle the sublime! (*CL*, 412)

Here the poets visualize their volume's typographic character in surprisingly precise detail. Each page must contain 18 lines of text surrounded by a generous amount of whitespace, and the book must be printed with ink as fine as the ink Cottle had used in publishing the 1798 second edition of Southey's *Joan of Arc*. Cottle honored these instructions, printing the lines of verse closely and neatly, and framed by ample margins. But it was impossible for him to honor the 18-lines-per-page limit consistently, and Wordsworth and Coleridge would have realized the difficulties created by the standard. Long titles and the stanzaic arrangement of certain poems reduced the lines of verse that could be printed on a page ("Lines written at a small distance from my house, and sent by my little boy to the person to whom they are addressed" illustrates both problems). And because certain pages slightly exceed the limit (for example, pages of "The Nightingale" and "Tintern Abbey" have 19 lines), either both poets or Wordsworth alone felt that a few pages printed with more than 18 lines would not diminish the typography's visual appeal.

No evidence survives that clearly indicates who determined the small foolscap octavo format for *Lyrical Ballads*, which measures approximately 6 3/4 by 3 3/4 inches. The decision may have originated with Wordsworth and Coleridge, but it is more likely that the bookseller proposed the format and the poets found it an acceptable choice. Cottle relied on foolscap octavo for his literary publications. Works he issued in the format include the first and second editions of Coleridge's *Poems on various subjects* (1794 and 1796), the second edition of Southey's *Poems* (1797) and *Letters written during a short residence in Spain and Portugal* (1798), Charles Lamb's and Charles Lloyd's *Blank Verse* (1798) and Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798). Foolscap octavo seems then to have been for Cottle the format of choice for *Lyrical Ballads*. But Cottle published literature in other formats (for example, in 1797 he issued his brother Amos's translation, *Icelandic Poetry, or the Edda of Saemund*, in a large octavo format), and so he might have proposed alternative sizes to Wordsworth and Coleridge, which they rejected in favor of foolscap octavo. But however the

format decision was made, foolscap octavo, I will explain below, perfectly answered Wordsworth's and Coleridge's purposes.

As they unfolded, then, the production phases of *Lyrical Ballads* point towards a close collaboration between Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Cottle. Moreover, although production involved a give and take between the poets and the publisher, at key moments in the volume's planning and printing Cottle handed over a good deal of control to the two poets, and eventually to Wordsworth alone. But why did the poets devote so much attention to the material properties of *Lyrical Ballads*? What urged them to become so deeply involved in such seemingly mundane concerns as ink, large margins, and the number of lines on a page?

Wordsworth claimed that *Lyrical Ballads* was published "for money and money alone" (*EY*, 267). In fact, the poets launched *Lyrical Ballads*, rather than one of the other publishing projects they had been discussing with Cottle over the winter and spring of 1798, because they felt it would prove more popular than these other ventures.[9] Clearly, money was a key motive behind the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. In 1798 Wordsworth had little of it in his pocket; he planned an extended trip to Germany with Coleridge, and both poets needed to cover their expenses. At the same time, the two poets had faltering hopes in the reformation of society by radical political action and growing ambitions for their literary careers. Thus a complex of financial, political, and personal motives lead Wordsworth and Coleridge to publish *Lyrical Ballads*, and these encouraged them to carefully consider how their verse would be presented to the public. Inevitably, they sought to control the material form of *Lyrical Ballads*—to "package" their work, so to speak. In that effort, they turned to printing and publishing practices that were as old as the mechanical press itself—what I would call the poetics of book production.[10]

Wordsworth and Coleridge were born in an era when book production was and had been regarded for time out of mind as a set of rhetorical as well as technical and commercial practices. In the 1700s, as in the 1500s and 1600s, many English booksellers and printers approached the mechanical and marketing dimensions of the book trade as a system of texts, and the public understood them in the same way. Title pages, formats, paper quality, typography, trademarks, shop signs, stock catalogues, handbills, publication notices, and other points of contact between the producers and the

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consumers of print—all comprised a system of signification and symbolization, which the tradesman used not merely to sell his publications, but to define a rapport with the reading public, and to articulate a relationship to literature and knowledge.

Eighteenth-century booksellers relied on the rhetorical resources of printing and publishing to address a readership that was steadily growing in size and complexity, and Cottle, Wordsworth, and Coleridge were quite familiar with this rhetoric. As a young, ambitious tradesman setting up shop in Bristol in 1791, Cottle recognized that his various commercial concerns—his approach to bookcraft, the tone of his promotional activities, the calibre of authors he published—would all be relevant to his effort to cut a figure on the contemporary literary scene. As I will suggest more fully below, Cottle managed these aspects of trade to construct a particular kind of publishing reputation, aiming to define himself as a liberal and humanitarian bookseller, perhaps in emulation of the great Unitarian bookseller of late eighteenth-century London, Joseph Johnson, who published Wordsworth's first books. Likewise, Wordsworth understood the rhetorical conventions of the printing and publishing industries. Although he had little say in the 1793 publication of *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, he was surely pleased that Johnson issued them in demy quarto. By the 1790s large quarto formats had become the standard size for publishing extended narrative poems that deserved, in the eyes of their publishers or authors, the public's attention.[11] Coleridge, too, understood these conventions. In fact, in planning the 1797 second edition of his *Poems* he sought to overthrow convention, to rationalize bookcraft, and to present himself to the public as an enlightened innovator of poetry books. He urged Cottle to omit pagination, poem titles, and a traditional table of contents from the edition, and to replace these with what he deemed a more orderly and visually coherent system of identifying his verse. Each poem in the volume, he imagined, would be assigned a number at a table of contents printed in the back of the book, and the number would then be printed over the opening lines of a poem in place of a title. "It will be new," he told Cottle, and "it will be *uniform*[,] whereas sticking the Titles over the pages, some very long titles, others short, others without any, is hateful to the eye" (*CL*, 297). But Cottle upheld convention; the *Poems* appeared with a traditional table of contents, page numbers, and verse titles.

In recognizing that book production was often a rhetorical undertaking, it would appear that Wordsworth's and Coleridge's efforts to

manage the physical properties of *Lyrical Ballads* were efforts to fashion poetic statements, that the book of *Lyrical Ballads* was an extension or reflection of its authors' literary labors—one conducted in the material realm of paper and type. Clearly, the poets' labor was in part aimed at simply promoting sales. Market appeal was on their minds when they chose to omit their names from the title page, for in the June 4 letter they justified their decision to Cottle by appealing to "popular works [that] were published anonymously" and by pointing out that Coleridge's political reputation might harm sales (*CL*, 412). But the letter also suggests that literary and intellectual ideas shaped Wordsworth's and Coleridge's production values. For there Coleridge discloses the poets' notions of bookcraft and in the same breath aligns these with intellectual and aesthetic concepts ("a Metaphysics of Typography," the sublime and the beautiful). More-over, he indicates that specific ideas—"abstruse reasons"—must govern the volume's material design.

　　We can begin to understand the ideas that lay behind the physical properties of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* by turning to its Advertise-ment. In the Advertisement Wordsworth calls attention to the innovative nature of the volume, describing the poems as "experi-ments" that incorporate into verse "the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes."[12] Although his claims for poetic innovation are not nearly as bold as those he makes in the Preface to the 1800 edition, where he describes *Lyrical Ballads* in the revolu-tionary terms of a new "class of Poetry . . . well adapted to interest mankind permanently," in the Advertisement Wordsworth does im-ply that the 1798 collection represents a marked departure from literary convention, and that the volume has an ambitious and radical purpose. For the poems are aimed at surmounting what Wordsworth calls the "pre-established codes of decision" of the English reading public, and to fulfill this aim they will risk offending readers who might feel that "the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity." I would suggest that the poets' "abstruse reasons" for fashioning the material book of *Lyrical Ballads* along particular lines can be roughly identified with the same ideas that inform Wordsworth's Advertisement—the inspired yet difficult task of pro-moting a new kind of poetry.

　　This task was indeed formidable because, as Wordsworth indi-cated in the Advertisement, the poetry in *Lyrical Ballads* might provoke "feelings of strangeness and aukwardness" among readers,

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leading some to question "by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title." The chief obstacle, then, to the success of *Lyrical Ballads* lay with making its "strangeness" familiar, domesticating the verse "experiment." Here the poetics of book production made a contribution, for the material text of *Lyrical Ballads* could be constructed to promulgate the poetry in *Lyrical Ballads*. Viewed at a glance or studied in moments of reflection, the physical properties of *Lyrical Ballads* could help establish a relationship between verse and audience by invoking the sociocultural values of particular kinds of readers, or by inducing them to adopt certain aesthetic attitudes towards the collection, or by reinforcing their apprehension of the poetry's messages and thus contributing to the pleasures of the text.

<div align="center">II</div>

Typographic design was one means of promulgating the poetry in *Lyrical Ballads*. As their printing instructions to Cottle suggest, Wordsworth and Coleridge were keenly concerned with the typographic appearance of *Lyrical Ballads*. In part, this is accountable in the context of printing history. Eighteenth-century England witnessed, among other developments in printing, the new typefaces created by Caslon and Baskerville, a shift in the typographic standards of poetry books detected by Bertrand Bronson, and a virtual explosion of finely printed books in the late 1780s and 1790s.[13] Undoubtedly Wordsworth and Coleridge, along with other writers of the day, were alive to the sheer sensuous appeal of typography. But the poets' concern for typography can be explored from other perspectives.

In the 1700s and early 1800s, the typographic tone or style of a book—the choice of typefaces, the arrangement of type on the page, the degree and kind of graphic embellishment—often figured as a token of what was contained in the book. As Hazlitt noted in the essay "On Reading New Books," in picking up a volume in a shop readers would "examine the type, to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work)."[14] And among book reviewers it was a common practice to comment on the craftsmanship of a work's typography as well as its literary or intellectual achievement. In a 1795 notice of the neatly printed *Poems of the late Mr. Mickle* a reviewer for the *British Critic* observed that Mickle's verse "deserved . . . to be collected in a handsome volume, and will be sought by the lovers of true poetry."[15] And after praising the

poetry in the 1795 edition of John Armstrong's *Art of Preserving Health*, another writer for the *British Critic* proclaimed: "When the ornaments of printing are bestowed upon a work deservedly popular . . . he must be a fastidious critic indeed who withholds his commendation. This is one of the most elegant little volumes we have ever seen."[16] As Hazlitt and these reviewers indicate, in contemporary print culture the quality of a book's printing often signified the work's literary quality and accomplishment. Good poetry was announced by good printing—an important point to keep in mind at a time when new publications were displayed in book shop windows opened to their title pages or a sample page of text.

Lyrical Ballads would undoubtedly strike contemporary readers as an attractive piece of presswork. Neat, clean, and legible, the book's typography would immediately signal that a good deal of value was being put upon the work. But further scrutiny suggests that Wordsworth and Coleridge sought to convey particular kinds of value through the typographic style of *Lyrical Ballads*. In asking Cottle to print just 18 lines of text, centered on each page, the poets envisioned an unelaborate but appealing look for their book's typography, which is fairly represented by pages 104–105 of *Lyrical Ballads* (figure 1), with the closing lines of "Simon Lee" verso and "Anecdote for Fathers" recto. As these pages suggest, the style of *Lyrical Ballads'* typography might be described as spare, plain, and unadorned. Although here and elsewhere in the volume a short double-rule line separates titles and the first lines of poems, there are no running titles and no running lines at the top of the page. The book also lacks any kind of graphic embellishment—no page bears head or tailpieces, printer's flowers, or similar typographic flourishes. The same Roman typeface is used throughout the volume, with boldface and italic used sparingly. Although signature letters mark the gatherings, catchwords were either removed before imposition or not used at all. Note, too, that the first letter in the first line of "Anecdote for Fathers" is printed with the same size type as the rest of the lines. In many contemporary poetry books this initial capital letter is printed with oversize type.

The plain style of *Lyrical Ballads'* typography becomes more noticeable when compared to other contemporary books of short poems. For instance, R. Anderson's *Poems on various subjects* (1798) exemplifies a relatively ornate typographic style (figure 2). The illustration provided here is one of the more restrained pages in a book that contains divisional title pages printed with Gothic type,

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" You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,
Give me your tool" to him I said;
And at the word right gladly he
Received my proffer'd aid.
I struck, and with a single blow
The tangled root I sever'd,
At which the poor old man so long
And vainly had endeavour'd.

The tears into his eyes were brought,
And thanks and praises seemed to run
So fast out of his heart, I thought
They never would have done.
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning.
Alas! the gratitude of men
Has oftner left me mourning.

ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS,

SHEWING HOW THE ART OF LYING MAY BE

TAUGHT.

I have a boy of five years old,
His face is fair and fresh to see;
His limbs are cast in beauty's mould,
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we stroll'd on our dry walk,
Our quiet house all full in view,
And held such intermitted talk
As we are wont to do.

Fig. 1 *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.

As we journey thro' life, often tost to and fro,
Nurs'd by Hope, at each phantom we catch as we go,
And the prospects around us enraptur'd we view,
Till they vanish, as shrinks from the sun-beams the dew:
On the soft lap of Pleasure awhile we are borne ;
Yet, in seizing the rose, are oft pierc'd by its thorn.
Ah! how thoughtless is man, who pursues a false glare,
That soon hastens his ruin, or adds to his care,
When RELIGION alone can life's sorrows remove,
And lead to the mansion of Pleasure above.

Fig. 2 R. Anderson, *Poems on various subjects* (1798). Courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

head and tailpieces, running titles, running lines, and boldfaced oversize type for the first letters of opening lines. Not apparent here, throughout the volume the printer relied on several type sizes and made much use of boldface and italic. Another example of an intricate typographic style, which suggests that the plain printing of *Lyrical Ballads* was not Cottle's usual approach, comes from Coleridge's 1796 *Poems* (figure 3). Here the page has a highly wrought appearance. Different sizes of type as well as italic and boldface are deployed, with running titles, and blocks of type are divided by a double-rule line near the top and an arabesque line near the bottom of the page.

"Plain," "spare," "restrained"—the words I use here remind us that simplicity was a central concept in eighteenth-century aesthetics and literary criticism, connoting, among other ideas, naturalness, a lack of artifice, an emphasis on the ordinary, and a reduction to essentials.[17] Wordsworth was familiar with the concept, and in the 1798 Advertisement he associated *Lyrical Ballads* with simplicity. There he distinguishes between the extravagant artifice of contemporary literature and the simple naturalness of his own verse, which rejects "the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers" for "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents"—so natural, Wordsworth felt, that some readers might judge the poetry's style and subject matter "too low" and "too familiar." Wordsworth develops these ideas more extensively in the 1800 Preface, asserting that his poems are founded on "incidents and situations from common life," that they concern "the essential passions of the heart," and that they echo "the language of men," who convey their feelings "in simple and unelaborated expressions." But as the Advertisement suggests, in 1798 he is already thinking of the simplicity of *Lyrical Ballads*.

In being very nearly reduced to lines of poetry printed on paper, the simple typographic style of *Lyrical Ballads* was crafted to exemplify in material form the artful simplicity of Wordsworth's poetry and, consequently, to help justify his verse "experiment." Yet despite the "natural delineation" of passion, character, and incident that are the stuff of his contributions to the volume, Wordsworth's poems in *Lyrical Ballads* stubbornly refuse to be read as "simple." More often than not, their simplicity yields to complexities and ambiguities, problems and questions. What did contemporary readers make of "Old Man Travelling," where the speaker's capacity for sentimental observation jars disconcertingly with the old man's

EFFUSION XXI.

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COMPOSED

WHILE CLIMBING THE LEFT ASCENT

OF

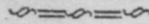## BROCKLEY COOMB,

IN THE

COUNTY OF SOMERSET,

MAY, 1795.

〜〜〜〜〜

With many a paufe and oft reverted eye
I climb the Coomb's afcent : fweet fongfters near
Warble in fhade their wild-wood melody :
Far off th' unvarying Cuckoo foothes my ear.

Fig. 3 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems on various subjects* (1796). Courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

simple but moving explanation of his journey? How did they react to "The Thorn," where the speaker's simpleminded superstitions are tautly contrasted to Martha Ray's intense suffering and madness? And what sense did readers find in "Simon Lee"? There the speaker does not respond to the old huntsman's tears with simple pity, but with the troubling remark,

> —I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
> With coldness still returning.
> Alas! The gratitude of men
> Has oftner left me mourning.[18]

Heather Glen has noted how simplicity often gives way to disturbing complexity in the poetry of *Lyrical Ballads*, and to explain this she has argued that the poet embraced the idiom but rejected the aims of popular magazine poetry of the day.[19] To Wordsworth's way of thinking, she suggests, the major problem in magazine poetry was its tendency to approach complex social and political problems, which its polite readers would have found threatening, in a reassuring, overly simplistic fashion. Thus, although this verse often confronted such perplexing issues as the poor, the afflicted, the dispossessed, and irrational or painful experience, it addressed these issues in an ideologically conservative manner. In their calm rhythms, their didactic perspectives, and in their urbane diction, the magazine poems developed no effective response to the tumultuous social and political difficulties England faced in the 1790s. Instead, they offered comfortable moral cliches, received wisdom, and shallow sentimentality.

Wordsworth chose to write in this idiom, and in doing so, Glen explains, he recognized that readers would bring to *Lyrical Ballads* expectations of mannered regularity, moral didacticism, and neat conclusiveness. In poems that reflected the matter, but not the manner, of magazine verse, Wordsworth evoked, played upon, and frustrated such expectations by refusing to develop conventional poetic effects and resolutions, all in an effort to reform the reader's social and moral imagination. The simplicity of *Lyrical Ballads'* typographic style, then, tends to confirm Glen's notions of the poetry, for Wordsworth found in plain printing a method for reinforcing the rhetorical impact of his poems. On pages that were pared down to almost nothing but lines of text, he created a reading frame that made a sensuous and immediate impression, persuading the reader—just before the exercise of intellectual faculties—to adopt an easy and uncomplicated mode of apprehending his

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verse. Thus the deceptively simple typographic design of the book cooperated with Wordsworth's poetry to first beguile, then bewilder, and finally edify and correct the reader's sensibilities.

The typographic simplicity of *Lyrical Ballads* could work on the reader's imagination in other ways as well. Contemporaries would have contemplated the volume's plain printing against the background of a publishing fashion that animated the English book trade from the 1780s to the 1810s. As the late eighteenth-century printer and literary chronicler John Nichols recalled, in the 1780s "an age of luxurious printing and high prices was beginning."[20] The world of books and reading witnessed a trend towards the production of large-format, ultrafine books—tomes that were profusely illustrated, printed on costly hot-pressed paper, and that often used typefaces especially designed for the occasion. Typical of the trend were the lavish books published at the turn of the centuries by the London firm of Cadell and Davies, which included a massive folio edition of James Murphy's *Arabian Antiquities of Spain* that sold for an unprecedented 40 guineas.[21] The trend is also exemplified by one of the most ambitious publishing projects of the century, John Boydell's and George Nicol's edition of Shakespeare that began to appear in 1791. This project boasted nine folio volumes of text and illustrations, printed with specially designed type, and two enormous imperial folio volumes of illustrations engraved after commissioned oil paintings by thirty-three of England's leading contemporary artists, including Reynolds, Romney, Barry, Fuseli, Opie, and West.[22]

At the beginning of the trend, booksellers generally devoted themselves to large quarto and folio publications that enshrined reading material which the public could regard in some way as highly distinguished or accomplished—epic poetry, exotic travel literature, subjects of historical and antiquarian interest. But the production values bestowed on large-format works of distinction were soon extended to all manner of small-format publications, and by the year *Lyrical Ballads* appeared there was a "general rage for splendid typography," as an observer of the literary scene commented in 1798.[23] Small-format books containing new literary and nonliterary works, editions of standard authors, and even topical pamphlets were subject to elegant and expensive printing. For example, the London bookseller George Steevens issued Shakespeare's collected works in fifteen handsomely printed octavo volumes that sold for £6 15s. for the set. Less expensive but equally attractive were the small-format editions of British poetry and drama that John Bell produced in the

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1780s and 1790s, which used typefaces designed by Bell and commissioned engravings.

Finely printed books sold well. If they had sold poorly, the booksellers would not have kept producing them for three decades. But among writers and the reading public the fashion for typographic elegance, which readers could readily associate with the steeply rising prices of books in the 1790s and early 1800s, raised concerns about the relationship between society and culture, and the trend was decried for placing an expensive barrier between books and readers.[24] In the 1812 edition of the enormously popular *Pursuits of Literature* (first published in 1794), T. J. Mathias registered the sentiments of numerous contemporaries when he condemned "the needlessly expensive manner of publishing most pamphlets, and books at this time":

> If the present rage of general printing on fine, creamy, wire-wove, hot-pressed paper be not stopped, the injury done to the eye from reading [hot-pressing imparted a shine to paper], and the shameful expense of the books, will in no very long time annihilate the desire of reading, and the possibility of purchasing them. *No new work whatsoever should be published in this manner*, or Literature will destroy itself.[25]

And a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of January 1794 lamented, "science now seldom makes her appearance without the expensive foppery of gilding, lettering, and unnecessary engravings, hot pressing, and an extent of margin as extravagant as a court lady's train." These typographic features, he reasoned, drove up the prices of books and thus impeded reading among the "inferior orders of society."[26]

As these comments indicate, the book trade's penchant for costly presswork led to a controversy that revolved around issues of luxury and literature, privilege and print. For finely printed books were produced for elites, and the trend excluded those who did not command the financial means to indulge large sums of money on books, and who did not enjoy the social and cultural resources to appreciate elaborate typographic values. Thus the "general rage for splendid typography" should be viewed as an event that provoked social and political frictions. No doubt, the trend irked numerous middle-class readers (the class addressed by Mathias and the *Gentleman's Magazine*) whose resentment of elegant and high-priced publications could encompass not merely the booksellers, but the privileged echelons of society that sustained the fashion. And un-

doubtedly the trend antagonized readers among the lower classes, or readers who were sympathetic to the lower classes, who could view the fashion symbolically as an instance of an aristocratically-based status quo that disdained their increasing access to books and reading.

Seen against the background of this contemporary cultural controversy, the unelaborate typography of *Lyrical Ballads* spoke eloquently of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's generous notions of poetry and readers. In the hands of a book-buyer browsing among new publications, or in the eyes of a passerby surveying a book shop window, the simple printing of *Lyrical Ballads* declared that learning and literature were not the exclusive domain of the wealthy few. In *Lyrical Ballads*, the reader of 1798 could discern a book that scrupulously rejected costly engravings, typefaces, and exacting presswork, that conscientiously refused to distinguish the public in terms of an affluent, discriminating minority. To Wordsworth's and Coleridge's way of thinking, then, *Lyrical Ballads'* unadorned typography projected a liberal and democratic vision of the English reading public.

III

Like the typographic style of the volume, the small foolscap octavo format of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* was also expressive. As noted earlier, the format was probably proposed by Cottle and accepted by the two poets because it answered their several purposes. Among these must be counted mere custom. By the conventions that governed eighteenth-century book production, collections of lyric verse were generally printed in small formats—that is, various sizes of octavo, duodecimo, and sextodecimo. But in the last two decades of the century the conventions began to change and small formats enjoyed an increasing popularity among English readers. Among other reasons for this change was a rapid escalation in the wholesale cost of paper, which doubled between 1790 and 1800, and then nearly doubled again by 1815.[27] On the average, paper amounted to between one third to one half of a book's production cost, and this was passed on to consumers. At a time when paper costs were driving up the retail prices of books, many readers found small volumes, which often retailed for between a few pennies to 10 shillings, more attractive than, say, quartos priced at a pound or more.

But in addition to convention and economics, a rough social and political logic shaped Cottle's choice and the poets' acceptance of *Lyrical Ballads'* foolscap octavo format. As Hazlitt quipped,

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Wordsworth's "Muse . . . is a levelling one" (*CWH*, 11:87), and Wordsworth's as well as Coleridge's and Cottle's liberal attitudes about books and readers were involved in the format decision, a circumstance that becomes evident in the full context of eighteenth-century print culture. From the late 1600s to the early 1800s, diverse reading material issued in small formats of a cheap or moderate price were in England's public sphere persistently associated with readers of low social, cultural, and economic status. At the same time, large, costly quartos and folios were identified with lettered and leisured readers. Thus in the 1690s and early 1700s we find a bookseller like Henry Hill the Younger pirating the works of his fellow tradesmen and publishing them, with the words "For the Benefit of the Poor" on their title pages, in small and cheap formats. Meanwhile we find the celebrated Jacob Tonson issuing choice literature in elegant and high-priced quartos and folios, occasionally though exclusive sub-scription arrangements. From the beginning to the end of the century, these patterns of book production marked and divided English print culture.[28] But in the late 1700s the social and political resonance of small books increased as liberal and radical publishers such as Joseph Johnson, John Almon, Richard Phillips, Daniel Isaac Eaton, and others issued hundreds of pamphlets and small books whose contents were reformist in spirit, or critical of England's domestic and foreign policies, or sympathetic to events in France. Indeed, selling or publishing a politically charged work in a small, low-priced edition could land a bookseller in jail—a fate that befell Johnson, who in 1799 spent six months in prison for selling pam-phlets of Gilbert Wakefield's *Reply to some parts of Bishop Llandaff's Address*.[29] But selling or publishing putatively seditious works in large, expensive formats could protect an author or bookseller from prosecution. As Pitt was said to have joked, after a cabinet meeting that considered Godwin's arrest for publishing in quarto *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, "A three guinea [*sic*] book could never do much harm amongst those who had not three shillings to spare."[30]

That *Lyrical Ballads'* small foolscap octavo format was chosen for its sociopolitical resonance seems likely given the sociopolitical dynamics of eighteenth-century book production. But the idea I am developing here becomes clear if we reconsider Cottle's brief bookselling career between 1791 and 1798, the year when mounting financial difficulties forced him to abandon book publishing. Al-though critics often dismiss him as a muddleheaded or self-serving tradesman, Cottle might better be viewed as a publisher who sought

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to represent himself to the Bristol reading public as a liberal and humanitarian bookseller—a sort of provincial Joseph Johnson. At first glance, this view of the bookseller appears highly improbable, for neither Cottle's 1847 *Reminiscences* nor the public and private writings of his early literary acquaintances create the impression that Cottle was anything more than a well-intentioned but feckless figure—which of course he was to some extent. Moreover, no record survives of Cottle's explicit opinions on the French Revolution, English political dissidence, England's war on France, the government's persecution of radicals, its measures to gag the press, and other momentous events and issues of the 1790s.

Yet Cottle was in all probability a sympathetic observer of the great democratic struggles of the day, and his own writings occasionally hint at his progressive views. The fact that he was asked to join the Pantisocracy scheme in 1794, an incident Cottle recounts in the *Reminiscences*, suggests that the bookseller's values were compatible with Coleridge's and Southey's outlook at the time, for it seems doubtful that Cottle would have been invited to help establish a North American commune dedicated to "Human Perfectibility" had he not been responsive to such utopian idealism.[31] Moreover, we might consider Cottle's role in the lectures on history and politics that Southey and Coleridge delivered at Bristol in 1795. As he indicates in his memoirs, Cottle figured as the publicist for these lectures, advertising them through prospectuses that he printed and distributed throughout Bristol. The prospectuses, which identified Cottle's shop as a ticket outlet, publicly associated the bookseller with lectures devoted to, among other topics of a political nature, "The national circumstances precursive to—1st, the English Rebellion,.—2nd, the French Revolution"; "The Liberty of the Press"; and "Revolution in General."[32] The lectures themselves linked Cottle to speakers whose forward-looking views on current events were well known to the citizens of Bristol.

Cottle's poetry also reveals his political sentiments. For example, in 1798 he published *Malvern Hills*, a tediously long and uninspired topographical poem, but one concerned with the hardships imposed on the rural poor by the luxury of the rich. In the Preface Cottle situates the plight of the poor in the context of contemporary anti-war sentiment:

> Have not all governments mistaken one of the first principles of government, when out of millions expended in other channels, they bestow not a single farthing on these ill-fated sufferers—

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these "blights of creation," whose claims more particularly apply to the state. But states, like individuals, keep themselves poor by extravagance, for what states can afford to assume the paternal character, and at the same time undertake their favorite wars, which not only fill the land with mourning, and send thousands and tens of thousands to an untimely grave, but in a few years occasion the expenditure of a sum sufficient to ameliorate the condition of all the poor in Europe.[33]

Convictions such as these, I am suggesting, shaped Cottle's attitudes towards bookselling.[34] We can sense the political tendency of his publications by turning to the final leaves of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, where Cottle inserted a stock catalogue of his recent books (figure 4).[35] To judge by this list, Cottle was pretty clearly emphasizing his connection to writers and publications of a particular calibre, for eleven of the fourteen books advertised in the catalogue could evoke political associations in the minds of contemporary readers. Here we find him issuing a medical lecture by Thomas Beddoes, whose reputation for revolutionary political views was firmly established in the eyes of the public; three works by John Prior Estlin and David Jardine, Unitarians who could be identified with enlightened social and political principles by readers of the day; and seven works by Coleridge, Southey, and Cottle himself. This catalogue would encourage readers to consider *Lyrical Ballads* in the same light they viewed these other publications, or vice versa.

Cottle emerges as a bookseller who embraced liberal attitudes towards his trade, projecting these in his public life and in his publishing activities. In fact, Cottle's approach to book production, such as it existed in his short career, seems to bear this out, for Cottle's publications indicate that he adhered to the same production strategies that tradesmen like Johnson maintained, publishing moderately priced works that were accessible to a broad spectrum of readers. As John Nichols observed, Johnson "consulted cheapness rather than appearance in his own publications," and his regard for literature "rendered him an enemy to that typographic luxury which . . . has so much enhanced the price of new books as to be a material obstacle to the indulgence of a laudable and reasonable curiosity by the reading Publick."[36] The production values Nichols ascribed to Johnson on the whole describe Cottle's as well. With few exceptions—notably, the 1796 quarto first edition of Southey's *Joan of Arc*—Cottle issued his books in small formats and he avoided costly typographic effects. This approach kept the retail prices of Cottle's

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books low and, in fact, most of his publications sold for between three to eight shillings per volume. These were reasonable prices at the time, making Cottle's books affordable to all but the poorest readers.

But in addition to the sociopolitical resonances of *Lyrical Ballads'* format, the small size had other public associations that accorded with the poets' literary aims. In the 1780s and 1790s it became culturally stylish, especially among those who cultivated a romantically melancholic sensibility, to read in picturesque settings. The fashion comprised an aspect of broader tastes and trends in late eighteenth-century cultural experience, which encompassed picturesque travel, rough and rugged landscape architecture, and topographical watercolor painting. An instance of the fad can be seen in Joseph Wright of Derby's 1781 portrait of Sir Brook Boothby (figure 5), the English editor of Rousseau's *Dialogues.* Wright painted Boothby in the traditional manner of representing the melancholic: in a reclining pose, with his right arm supporting his head, and with his coat and waistcoat unbuttoned.[37] But Boothby is located in a peaceful natural setting that is noteworthy for its close observation of English flora, and he holds what has been identified as either a copy of the *Dialogues* he published in 1780 or a manuscript copy of Rousseau's *Confessions.* Another instance of out-of-doors reading is found in a passage from Charlotte Smith's popular 1794 novel, *The Old Manor House.* Here a central character, the brooding Orlando, copes with the tribulations of romantic love:

> The cool tranquility of morning, the freshness of the air, the beauty of the country whithersoever he turned his eyes, had not sufficient power to soothe and tranquillize his spirits—he believed a book which should for the moment carry him outside himself would do it more effectively; and returning to the library he took from the shelves two or three small volumes of poetry which he had purchased, and retir[ed] to an elevated spot in the park.[38]

In art as undoubtedly in life, in the late eighteenth century the world-weary spirit might carry a book to a beautiful spot in the woods or the hills, and by reading there could find a moment of peace.

In publishing *Lyrical Ballads* in a small portable format—contemporary booksellers often called foolscap octavo volumes "pocket editions"—Wordsworth and Coleridge adopted the pocket edition

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PUBLISHED

For Joseph Cottle, *Bristol,*

Mr. T. Longman, and Meſſrs. Lee and Hurst,

Paternoster-Row, London.

————————

1. Poems, by Robert Southey, Second Edition—5s. Boards.

2. Joan of Arc, by Robert Southey, Second Edition, correĉted, with copious notes—2 vols. 12s.

3. Poems, by S. T. Coleridge, to which are added, Poems, by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd, Second Edition. 6s. Boards.

4. In the Press, a Second Edition, correĉted, with views in aqua tinta, of Letters written during a short Residence in Spain and Portugal, by Robert Southey.

5. A Series of Poems, containing the Plaints, Consolations, and Delights of Achmed Ardebeili, a Persian Exile. With Notes, Historical and Explanatory, by Charles Fox, Oĉtavo, 8s. Boards

6. Poems, by Joseph Cottle, Second Edition, 4s. Boards.

7. Icelandic Poetry, or the Edda of Sæmund, translated into English Verse, by A. S. Cottle, of Magdalen College, Cambridge, Oĉtavo, 6s. Boards.

8. Edmund Oliver, by Charles Lloyd, 2 vols. 12mo. 8s. Boards.

9. In the Press, a Second Volume of Poems, by Robert Southey, including the Vision of the Maid of Orleans, formerly printed as the Ninth Book of Joan of Arc.
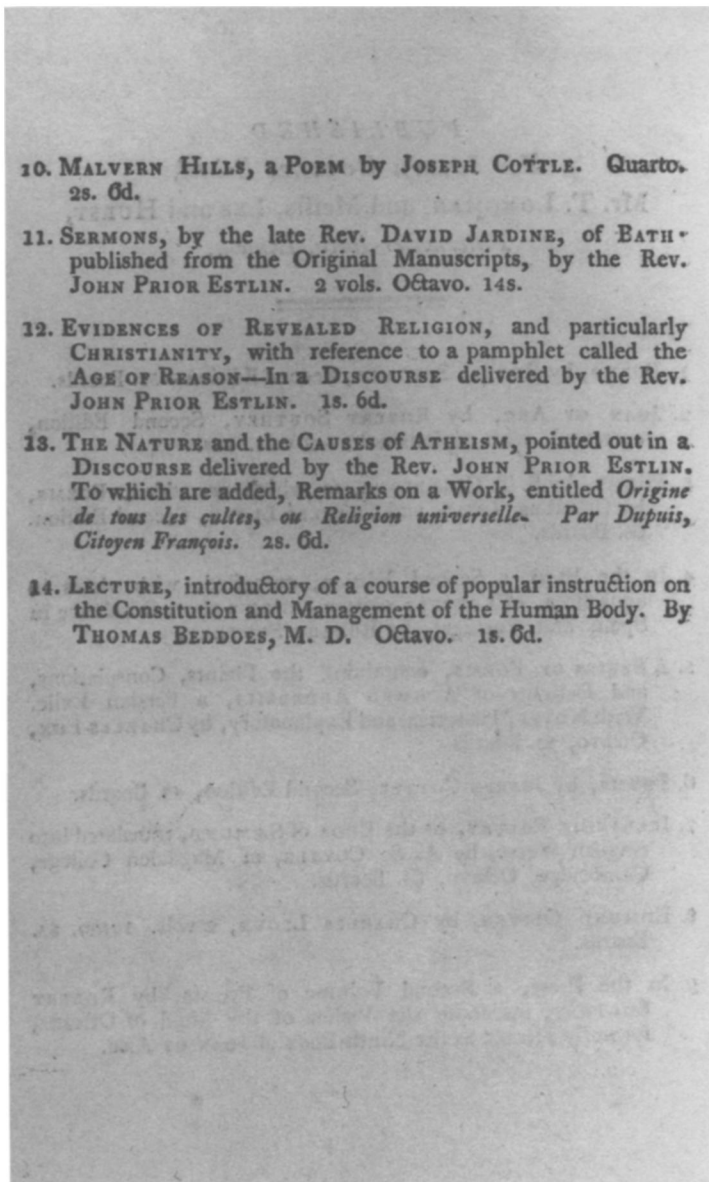
10. MALVERN HILLS, a POEM by JOSEPH COTTLE. Quarto. 2s. 6d.

11. SERMONS, by the late Rev. DAVID JARDINE, of BATH, published from the Original Manuscripts, by the Rev. JOHN PRIOR ESTLIN. 2 vols. Octavo. 14s.

12. EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION, and particularly CHRISTIANITY, with reference to a pamphlet called the AGE OF REASON—In a DISCOURSE delivered by the Rev. JOHN PRIOR ESTLIN. 1s. 6d.

13. THE NATURE and the CAUSES of ATHEISM, pointed out in a DISCOURSE delivered by the Rev. JOHN PRIOR ESTLIN. To which are added, Remarks on a Work, entitled *Origine de tous les cultes, ou Religion universelle. Par Dupuis, Citoyen François*. 2s. 6d.

14. LECTURE, introductory of a course of popular instruction on the Constitution and Management of the Human Body. By THOMAS BEDDOES, M. D. Octavo. 1s. 6d.

Fig. 4 Stock catalogue from *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Fig. 5 Joseph Wright of Derby, *Sir Brook Boothby* (1781). Courtesy of the Tate Gallery, London.

and reformulated the fashion for picturesque reading. Neither poet was interested in publishing a verse collection that might help the melancholic while away an hour in the woods. Rather, in such poems as "The Nightingale," "Lines written at a small distance from my house," "Expostulation and Reply," and "The Tables Turned," the poets fashioned an alternative experience for the out-of-doors reader, one that would inspire the reader to establish with the natural world the same modes of relationship that Wordsworth describes in the poem that closes the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, "Tintern Abbey," where "In nature and the language of the sense" the poet locates

> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, the soul
> Of all my moral being. (*WW*, 109–12)

It was Wordsworth's hope, in publishing *Lyrical Ballads* in a small format that could be easily carried outside, that readers would recreate for themselves the same experience he envisions in "Tintern Abbey," where nature and consciousness—mediated and encouraged by poetry—might interact, and thus elevate and ennoble the reader's own moral being.

Before we turn to other matters, we should note that there are important material differences between the 1798 and later editions of *Lyrical Ballads*. We can begin to sense the significance of these differences by understanding the conditions of production that lead to the first edition. The 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* emerged from a moment of inspired collaboration, when Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Cottle recognized the importance and promise of their project, and worked together to realize in material form their shared vision of the text. But new conditions of production prevailed in the editions of 1800–1805. Coleridge withdrew from direct involvement in the later editions, resigning his voice in *Lyrical Ballads* to Wordsworth. Cottle formed a printing business with Biggs after the collapse of his publishing affairs in 1798, and he figured only as the printer and not the publisher of the 1800 and 1802 editions. Thus Wordsworth became solely responsible for the 1800–1805 *Lyrical Ballads*, publishing them through T. N. Longman, a bookseller with whom he never established a congenial rapport.[39]

Working without his original collaborators, Wordsworth altered the later editions of *Lyrical Ballads*, and these alterations point towards a change in his attitudes about the collection between the 1798 and the 1800–1805 editions. In preparing the 1798 *Lyrical*

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Ballads, Wordsworth's emphasis, along with the emphases of Coleridge and Cottle, had fallen on the presentation of the text, and they had all directed the technical and commercial resources of book production to that end. But in preparing the 1800–1805 *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth was left to pursue his own interests. In these editions, he printed his own but omitted Coleridge's name from the title page. He added a Preface that includes a full discussion of the poet and a philosophical explanation of his literary methods and values. He de-emphasized Coleridge's role in the project by moving "The Ancyent Marinere" from first to twenty-third place in the first volume. And in 1802 and 1805 he altered the title to *Lyrical Ballads, with pastoral and other poems*, a move which encouraged readers to view Wordsworth and his poetry in a venerable literary tradition. These changes indicate that the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800–1805 became Wordsworth's vehicle for reputation-making. They reveal that *Lyrical Ballads*, after it fell into Wordsworth's hands, was produced more to construct Wordsworth the poet than to promulgate *Lyrical Ballads* the literary innovation.

IV

There was nothing out of the ordinary in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's efforts of 1798 to turn print technology to their own literary purposes, and in that very ordinariness lies a matter that should attract our notice. For numerous authors and artists of the Romantic period shared with Wordsworth and Coleridge a similar impulse to utilize the resources of print.[40] Among others, Blake, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Turner, Rowlandson, and Gillray were drawn to the mechanical press, and each sought to adapt print to his own particular artistic concerns. Some met with failure, others with success, but all worked to socialize their texts, to engage the contemporary cultural marketplace through the technical and commercial apparatuses of print.

There is a tendency to overlook this impulse in modern critical views, and to emphasize instead the Romantic author's repudiation of the marketplace.[41] According to this line of thinking, which I can only sketch out briefly here, the growth of the eighteenth-century reading public and the development of the commercial publishing system had a cumulative impact on English literary culture in the late 1700s and early 1800s. As the number of readers who were neither educated in the classics nor familiar with long-established literary conventions increased sharply, the publishers began to direct

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their energies more towards the production of popular and saleable reading matter, and less towards sophisticated and accomplished literary fare. Authors of serious work found themselves neglected by the public and the publishers, and, as a result of this, their writings are often inscribed with a deep hostility towards the contemporary literary marketplace—a hostility that is expressed in terms of artistic alienation, a mystification of imaginative truth, and a rejection of the public and its tastes.

This line of thinking helps explain the author's relationship to the contemporary literary marketplace. But a growing number of studies on the material conditions of authorship, writing, and the text in the Romantic period imply that the author's commercial affairs were a good deal more complicated.[42] These studies encourage us to re-examine the relationships that obtained between literary culture and the marketplace in the late 1700s and early 1800s. In that effort, we should keep in mind that the expansion of the eighteenth-century literary market reflects England's movement from a manuscript to a print-based culture, a shift which began with the importation of the mechanical press to England, but which reached a culminating phase in the late 1700s and early 1800s. This situation helped place writers of the Romantic period in a unique position to measure the impact of print on culture and society. Of course, writers who flourished before this time could perceive that print was consequential. In 1778 Samuel Johnson observed that "Virgil is less talked of than Pope, and Homer is less talked of than Virgil," but that "we now have knowledge more generally diffused." This he imputed to the "teeming of the press in modern times."[43] But the print milieu of 1790–1830 was manifestly different from Johnson's. It was marked by such phenomena as the emergence of a mass audience for print; slow but steady improvement in print technology; the advent of the modern publishing house; the establishment of highly influential periodicals with national circulations; and, in the proliferation of provincial book shops, the development of an extensive system of retail book distribution.[44]

No doubt, writers were also in a unique position to contemplate the impact of print because they could identify broader historical developments and circumstances with the printing press. The French Revolution, for example, was by some regarded as an event closely linked to printing. In seeking to account for the Revolution, Burke and others pointed towards the steady production of polemical and philosophical literature in eighteenth-century France. Similarly, the

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persistent pressure for political reform in contemporary England was associated with radical booksellers and pamphlet writers, and journalists like Cobbett.

Thus, the development of the print milieu in the late 1700s and early 1800s, as well as the social and political atmosphere of the time, provided writers with new perspectives on print, and the writers developed new ways of looking at, responding to, and imagining print. Their responses to print were varied, but there was a coherence and a pattern to their outlook, which we must now try to characterize. The writers of the Romantic period were encouraged to see the printing press as an instrument of profound transformative power, for they observed that print had exerted a considerable social, cultural, and political force in the past, and that it was continuing to exert this force in their own lifetimes. But although the writers were acutely aware of print's potentialities, they were also highly critical of contemporary arrangements in print culture, which in their view had lead to the deterioration of literary culture. Sensing the possibilities of print, but discontented with current configurations, writers of the time sought to transcend the limitations of existing arrangements, to realize the potential inscribed in the mechanical press, and to use print to change their world. In effect, they sought—but were finally denied—a revolution in print culture.

Clearly, contemporary writers could associate print with transformative power. "The French Revolution might be described as the remote but inevitable consequence of the invention of the art of printing," Hazlitt wrote in *The Life of Napoleon* (*CWH*, 13:38). In *Political Justice* Godwin linked the progress of society to "the discovery of printing," claiming that by "this art we seem to be secured against the future perishing of human improvement."[45] And poets as different as Blake and Wordsworth ascribed to print some powerful possibilities. Blake imagined print in apocalyptic terms. In *Jerusalem* he hears the voice of "God from whom all books are given"—"Even from the depths of Hell"—and he thus proclaims, "Therefore I print; nor vain my types shall be: / Heaven, Earth, and Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony."[46] And in the fifth book of *The Prelude* Wordsworth implies that print has a power second only to nature, for books, like natural objects, are charged with a potential to elevate and transport the consciousness out of time. "Me hath such deep entrancement half-possessed," he reflects in the 1805 text, "When I have held a volume in my hand / Poor earthly casket of immortal Verse!" (*WW*, 5:162–64).

But while they perceived the power of print, authors of the Romantic period felt that print—especially in its guise as a commercial institution—had largely failed to live up to its promise. Among other works, Byron's "English Bard and Scotch Reviewers," Wordsworth's "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" of the 1815 *Poems*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Peacock's "Four Ages of Poetry," Isaac D'Israeli's *Calamities of Authors*, and Mathias's *Pursuits of Literature* all note or explore the abuse of print's power. So, too, does the Preface to the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. There Wordsworth decries the "rapid communication of intelligence" for helping to drive "the invaluable work of our elder writers . . . into neglect" and promoting instead "frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse," all of which pander to the public's "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation."

In their public and private writings, nearly every writer of the Romantic period discloses these attitudes towards print, and many reveal an impulse to alter, transform, or reconstitute print culture along different lines. The impulse can be detected in their various efforts to circumnavigate the system of commercial publication. Thus, as a means of symbolic retaliation against the mass reproduction of the text, Blake embraced an artisanal, manual approach to book production that looked back to medieval conceptions of the book as a sacred object, where each book could be seen as an emanation of the *libri dei* and a reflection of "God from whom all books are given." And, as John Sutherland has argued, in their desire to control the printing and publication of their work, Scott and Blake reveal a similar outlook. Like Blake, Scott sought a mastery over the material production of his writings, which lead him to finance his own printing house, dictate terms to his publisher, Archibald Constable, and to write and publish anonymous reviews of his works for the periodical press.[47] And Wordsworth, too, challenged the contemporary publishing system. As Susan Eilenberg has noted in an analysis of Wordsworth's attitudes towards intellectual property, in 1808 the poet hurled himself into the copyright reform movement, and over the next three decades doggedly argued that an author's right of possession ought to be legally constituted a well-nigh permanent possession.[48] Had Parliament incorporated his views in the 1842 Copyright Bill, which extended the term of copyright from 28 to 42 years, the economic foundations of the publishing industry would have been altered. Publishers built their business on the

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purchase and possession of copyrights; they would have been compelled to rent copyright from authors and their heirs in perpetuity—no doubt, at a higher and higher rate for perennially marketable work—had Wordsworth persuaded Parliament to his position.

The impulse to transform print culture is also exemplified in the efforts of contemporary writers and artists to harness the power of print to their own ends. Thus Byron, as Jerome McGann has implied, developed into a consummate print-culture poet, carefully fashioning a public persona, not for the mere pleasures of celebrity, but to assail a society riddled with hypocrisy and cant.[49] For the *Liber Studiorum* and his many series of engraved landscape views, Turner embraced the emerging steel-plate engraving process, aiming to instruct the public about his art and to elevate landscape painting to the lofty status of historical painting.[50] And Gillray, in hundreds of popular engravings that offered sardonic commentary on national affairs, located in print a power to influence the political destiny of England.

The 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* can be aligned with these patterns of culture, for Wordsworth's labors on the volume reflect a similar impulse. He sought to transform English verse by forging, as he put it the 1800 Preface, a new "class of Poetry . . . well adapted to interest mankind permanently." In its typographic simplicity, in its small foolscap octavo format, and in its various other production values, the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, I would suggest, is a material artifact of that attempt.

Columbia, Missouri

<center>NOTES</center>

[1] Numerous poetry books of the time had the words "lyric," "lyrical," or "ballad" in their titles (for example, J. Edwards's *Lyric Poems* [1797], Mary Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* [1800], and George Harvey's *Ballad Stories, Sonnets &c.* [1799]), and so the poets chose "Lyrical Ballads" for its market appeal as much as for innovative generic reasons, or more so. See John E. Jordan, *Why the Lyrical Ballads? The Background, Writing, and Character of Wordsworth's 1798 Lyrical Ballads* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), 182.

² Thomas J. Wise, *A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of William Wordsworth* (London: n.p., 1916); D. F. Foxon, "The Printing of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798," *The Library* 5th ser., 4 (1954): 221–41; Robert W. Daniel, "The Publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*," *Modern Language Review* 33 (1938): 406–10; James A. Butler, "Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the *Lyrical Ballads*: Five Letters, 1797–1800," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 75 (1976): 139–53; and *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1992).

³ I draw on several sources for this sketch, including the studies by Foxon, Daniel, Butler, and Butler and Green cited in the preceding note, as well as Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*, 2nd. ed. (London, 1848); Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Early Years, 1770–1799* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967); and letters written by Dorothy Wordsworth in the spring and summer 1798, which are printed in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787–1805*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). All subsequent references to the *Letters* are cited parenthetically in the text by page and abbreviated *EY*.

⁴ *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–1971), 1:411–13. All subsequent references to this edition and volume are cited parenthetically in the text by page and abbreviated *CL*. Griggs believes the letter was written between 28 May and 4 June, but if we follow Mark Reed's chronology (238) it must belong to a date after 30 May, when Cottle left the poets for Bristol, and so I assume the 4 June date.

⁵ In the 4 June letter Coleridge tells Cottle that "in a week or two I shall see you" (*CL*, 411).

⁶ See James H. Averill, "The Shape of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)," *Philological Quarterly* 60 (1981): 387–407, and Kenneth R. Johnston, "The Triumphs of Failure: Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798," in *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1987), 133–59.

⁷ For examples see the essays on the organization schemes fashioned by poets in Neil Fraistat, ed., *Poems in their Places: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986).

⁸ Cottle, *Reminiscences*, 178.

⁹ These projects involved Coleridge's and Wordsworth's plays, *Osorio* and *The Borderers*, and Wordsworth's "Salisbury Plain" (which would eventually appear in 1842, after much revision, under the title "Guilt and Sorrow") and "The Ruined Cottage" (which would be revised and appear in the first book of *The Excursion* in 1814). For an account of the relationship of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* to these other publishing ideas see Jordan, ch. 1.

¹⁰ For a study of the book trade's poetics from the late 1600s to the early 1800s see Alan D. Boehm, "The Poetics of Literary Commerce: Patrician and Popular Bookselling and the Rise of Publishing, 1700–1825" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1992). Other terms have been used to characterize what I call the poetics of book production. In *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), Jerome J. McGann examines the expressive nature of the book and book production under the term "bibliographic codes." Donald McKenzie views the rhetorical dimensions of the book as part of "the sociology of the text" (*Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* [London: British Library, 1986] and "Typography and

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Meaning: The Case of William Congreve," *Buch und Buchhandel in Europa im achtenzehnten Jarhundert: fünftes Wolfenbütteler Symposium vom 1. bis 3. November 1977*, ed. Giles Barber and Bernhard Fabian [Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1981], 81–126). This essay develops ideas McKenzie first put forth in his unpublished Sandars Lectures, delivered at Cambridge in 1975 and 1976.

[11] In the early eighteenth century, quarto replaced folio as the format for deluxe publications. See David Foxon, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade*, rev. and ed. James McLaverty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 63–64, 71–76.

[12] All quotations of the 1798 Advertisement and the 1800 Preface are from the first volume of *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). Because the passages I quote here and elsewhere are numerous, brief, and among the most familiar in the Advertisement and Preface, I dispense with citations to this edition in the text.

[13] Bertrand Harris Bronson, "Printing as an Index of Taste," *Facets of the Enlightenment: Studies in English Literature and its Contexts* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), 326–65. According to Bronson, "Before 1750 poetry was likely to be generously capitalized; after 1750 it was likely to be given modern capitalization" (339).

[14] *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: Dent, 1933), 17:201. All subsequent references to this edition are cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page and abrreviated *CWH*.

[15] *British Critic*, Preface to volume 5, January-June 1795, ix–x.

[16] *British Critic*, March 1795, 295.

[17] For a discussion of simplicity in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and practice, with extensive reference to *Lyrical Ballads*, see Raymond D. Havens, "Simplicity, A Changing Concept," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953): 3–32.

[18] *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill, Oxford Authors series (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), 88. All subsequent references to this edition are cited parenthetically in the text by line and abbreviated *WW*.

[19] Heather Glen, *Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's Songs and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), ch. 2.

[20] Cited in A. S. Collins, *The Profession of Letters: A Study of the Relation of Author to Patron, Publisher, and Public, 1780–1832* (London: Routledge, 1928), 112.

[21] For a discussion of Cadell and Davies's bookselling activities see Theodore Besterman's introduction to *The Publishing Firm of Cadell and Davies: Select Correspondence and Accounts, 1793–1836* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938).

[22] A full account of the Shakespeare project is given by Sven H. A. Bruntjen in *John Boydell (1719–1804): A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London* (1974; rpt. New York: Garland Press, 1985), ch. 2.

[23] David Rivers, *Living Authors of Great Britain*, 2 vols. (1798; rpt. New York: Garland Press, 1970), 1:44.

[24] For the rising prices of books at the time see Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 51–52.

[25] T. J. Mathias, *The Pursuits of Literature* (London, 1812), 199.

[26] *Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1794, 44.

[27] Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books* (1939; rpt. London: Allen and Unwin, 1974), 325–27.

²⁸ See Boehm, chs. 2–4.

²⁹ The episode is recounted by Gerald P. Tyson in *Joseph Johnson: A Liberal Publisher* (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1979), 154–70. As Tyson explains, Johnson was prosecuted and punished for the political character of his entire publishing enterprise, not simply for retailing Wakefield's pamphlet.

³⁰ Cited in Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 60.

³¹ Cottle, *Reminiscences*, 6–8.

³² Cottle reprinted the prospectuses in the *Reminiscences*, 17–19. Coleridge's 1795 pamphlets on politics and religion were derived from his lectures, but it is unclear what role Cottle played in their publication.

³³ Joseph Cottle, *Malvern Hills* (London, 1798), x.

³⁴ Cottle's political convictions are not obviously signalled, as Johnson's manifestly are, by the books he chose to publish. In fact, Cottle's total publishing record tends to obscure the liberal character of his book business. According to my calculation, he issued a little more than 100 books and pamphlets, first and subsequent editions included, between 1791 and 1798 (this figure, which should be regarded as tentative, is derived from imprint information in the *Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue* and research based on holdings in Indiana University's Lilly Library and Harvard's Houghton Library). The lion's share of these publications were issued collectively by groups of booksellers, or "congers" as they were known in the 1700s, and more often than not their title pages indicate that Cottle was a minor shareholder in joint-publication schemes supported by up to eight booksellers. Because investment and risks were shared by the conger, joint publication was a prudent commercial tactic for a young bookseller. Between 1796 and 1798 the tactic began to pay off for Cottle, putting him in a position to publish, either independently from congers or as the principal shareholder, some two-dozen books, and allowing him to explore periodical publication with Coleridge's *Watchman*, which he helped issue from March to May 1796. This is a small number of publications from which to draw conclusions. But with only a few exceptions these books had a political consistency and, as my discussion in the text will suggest, these were the books on which Cottle staked his reputation.

³⁵ Cottle prepared the list at a time when he intended to publish the 1798 volume. It does not appear in all copies of the 1798 edition, which suggests that an effort was made to remove it by the Arch brothers or by Cottle on their behalf.

³⁶ John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 9 vols. (London, 1812), 3:464.

³⁷ The portrait's formal and iconographic features are examined by Frederick Cummings in "Boothby, Rousseau, and the Romantic Malady," *Burlington Magazine* 110 (1968): 659–67.

³⁸ Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House* (London: Pandora, 1987), 300.

³⁹ For Wordsworth's relations with Longman see Harold G. Merriam, *Edward Moxon: Publisher of Poets* (1939; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966), 130.

⁴⁰ Authors were adapting print to their own literary aims well before the late 1700s. For discussions of this see, among other studies, Richard C. Newton, "Jonson and the (Re)-Invention of the Book," in *Classic and Cavalier: Essays on Jonson and the Sons of Ben*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), 31–55; Peter Lindenbaum, "John Milton and the Republican Mode of Literary Production," *Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991):

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121–36; and Vincent Carretta, "'Images Reflect from Art to Art': Alexander Pope's Collected *Works* of 1717," in *Poems in their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections*, ed. Neil Fraistat (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), 195–233.

[41] Studies that endorse or imply this view include Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958); M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953); Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism from the Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984) and *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983); Roger Sales, *English Literature in History, 1780–1830: Pastoral and Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1983); and Marilyn Gaul, *English Romanticism: The Human Context* (New York: Norton, 1988).

[42] Examples of such studies include Peter J. Manning, "The White Doe of Rylstone, The Convention of Cintra, and the History of a Career," *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), 165–94; Jerome J. McGann, "The Book of Byron and the Book of a World," *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 255–293; Susan Eilenberg, "Mortal Pages: Wordsworth and the Reform of Copyright," *ELH* 56 (1989): 351–74; Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1987); and Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994). I should point out that Woodmansee's study is chiefly concerned with German literary culture in the late 1700s and early 1800s, but it also addresses the contemporary situation in England extensively, particularly in its final chapter.

[43] James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), 979. For a study of Johnson and print culture see Alvin Kernan, *Samuel Johnson and the Impact of Print* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989).

[44] These developments in the print milieu of the late 1700s and early 1800s are examined in Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), 189; Terry Belanger, "From Bookseller to Publisher: Changes in the London Book Trade, 1750–1850," in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1983), 5–25; Leslie Chard, "Bookseller to Publisher: Joseph Johnson and the English Book Trade, 1760–1810," in *The Library* 5th ser., 32 (1977): 138–54; and John Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985).

[45] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 280.

[46] *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. and ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 145.

[47] John Sutherland, "Scott: The Poet as Producer," Wordsworth-Coleridge Association session, MLA Convention, Toronto, 28 December 1993.

[48] See Eilenberg, "Mortal Pages."

[49] See McGann, "The Book of Byron."

[50] The use of hard steel plates permitted the reproduction of thousands of engravings before the plate wore out, whereas the softer copper plates could only yield about 1,000 impressions before the plate became too worn to reproduce a

clear impression. Turner's use of the new engraving process is discussed by Eric Shanes in *Turner's Rivers, Harbours and Coasts* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), 8–9.

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