



PROJECT MUSE®

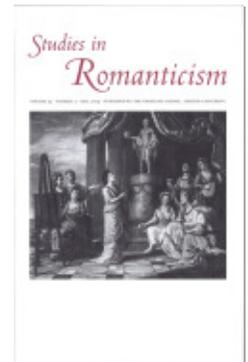
Wordsworth's Bibliographers

Bruce E. Graver

Studies in Romanticism, Volume 53, Number 3, Fall 2014, pp. 457-465 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/srm.2014.0008>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/740593/summary>

Review Essay: Wordsworth's Bibliographers

Mark Lafayette Reed. *A Bibliography of William Wordsworth: 1787–1930*.
2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013. cxxvi+1238. \$295.

WORDSWORDH BIBLIOGRAPHY HAS REMAINED IN A CURIOUSLY UNSATISFACTORY state. Most of the earliest attempts, compiled in the late 19th century, were appendages to collective editions of Wordsworth's poetry, and these are woefully lacking in the kind of bibliographical detail that booksellers, collectors, and scholars alike depend on.¹ Twentieth-century bibliographies of Wordsworth are, on the whole, less unsatisfactory. Wise, Broughton, Patton, Healey, and Metzdorf offer fuller bibliographical descriptions, Healey especially, but in each case the bibliographers compiled catalogues of particular collections—the Ashley Library, the Cornell Wordsworth collection, the Amherst Wordsworth collection, and the Tinker Collection at Yale (Reed xi–xii).² They were not attempting a com-

1. The earliest bibliography, “a Bibliography of the successive editions of the Poems which were published in Wordsworth's lifetime,” was prepared by William Knight for the newly-formed Wordsworth Society in 1882. It was published as “Bibliography of the Poems of Wordsworth,” *The Transactions of the Wordsworth Society* 1 (1882): 5–16, and contains no physical description, except for the occasional “4to.” or “8vo.” J. R. Tutin's bibliography was appended to *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. John Morley (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888), 897–912 (Reed, 692). Ernest Dowden also included a bibliography in his seven-volume edition of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1892), 7:306–28 (Reed, 782–83). A more comprehensive bibliography was included in William Knight's *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 8 vols. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1896). It can be found in 8:327–432 (Reed, 829–31).

2. Leslie Nathan Broughton, *The Wordsworth Collection Formed by Cynthia Morgan St. John and Given to Cornell University by Victor Emanuel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1931). George Harris Healey, *The Cornell Wordsworth Collection: A Catalogue of Books and Manuscripts Presented to the University by Mr Victor Emanuel Cornell 1919* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957). Cornelius Patton, *The Amherst Wordsworth Collection: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Amherst, MA, 1936). Robert F. Metzdorf, *The Tinker Library: A Bibliographical Catalogue of the Books and Manuscripts collected by Chauncey Brewster Tinker, Sterling Professor of English Literature, Emeritus and Keeper of Rare Books in the Yale University Library* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). Thomas J. Wise, *A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of William Wordsworth* (London: privately printed, 1916); *Two Lake Poets: a Catalogue of Printed*

prehensive bibliographical study of Wordsworth's separate printed publications. To an Americanist, this would seem an almost incomprehensible situation: Americanists have the extraordinary *Bibliography of American Literature* to depend on, as well as fine individual bibliographies for most major American writers. But for scholars trying to study Wordsworth's publication and reception history, both in his lifetime and especially in the years after his death, and for collectors and book-dealers trying to determine the rarity and value of particular books, there has been no single work to guide them.

With the publication of Mark Lafayette Reed's magnificent new *Bibliography of William Wordsworth 1787-1930*, all that has changed. Over a career of some 50 years, Reed has not been a 250-page-monograph kind of a scholar; instead, he has always published in twos—two volume sets, every two decades. His two-volume Wordsworth *Chronology*, published in 1967 and 1975, totals 1050 pages; his two-volume edition of the *13-Book Prelude*, published in 1991 and the centerpiece of the Cornell Wordsworth, contains over 2350 pages; his two volume *Bibliography*, the crown upon his lifetime's efforts, weighs in at something over half that, a mere 1238 pages, not counting the 125 pages of introduction and preliminaries. It is, and will remain, a foundational work for Wordsworth scholarship. No one, not even its reviewers, will read it straight through, cover to cover to cover to cover. But anyone serious about how Wordsworth presented himself to the public, or interested in how later publishers and editors repackaged and re-presented him after his death, will consult it; and everyone, from beginning graduate students to the most senior among us, should read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest Reed's learned introduction. At times oddly humorous, in a dry North Carolinian sort of a way, the introduction stands as the most important overview of Wordsworth's publication history ever written.

In this review essay, I will first look briefly at Reed's predecessors, and then turn to Reed's volumes and look closely at a handful of the most interesting entries. Rather than begin with all of the late 19th-century bibliographies, however, I will begin with William Knight's, published in his 1896 edition of Wordsworth's works. William Knight has received short shrift from 20th-century scholars, largely for losing and excerpting Dorothy Wordsworth's Alfoxden Journal, and mistranscribing scores of Wordsworth family manuscripts: "Chaos and old Knight" has been an inside joke among Wordsworth editors for generations. But his editorial efforts produced, Reed argues, "the first truly scholarly edition of Wordsworth" (1882-86),

Books, Manuscripts, and Autograph Letters by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: privately printed, 1927).

including a massive three-volume biography (1889). In that edition he attempted, for the first time, to present Wordsworth's poems in chronological order so that his poetical development could be studied (Reed cx, 618).³ Seven years later, in 1896, Knight published a new edition of Wordsworth's works in a smaller and much cheaper format, heavily revised, rearranged, and with much new material in the headnotes and apparatus. And he included, at the end of volume 8, a new bibliography divided into three main parts: Great Britain, America, and France. Knight prepared the first part himself, considerably expanding the description of life editions from his earlier bibliographical lists, and including posthumous editions, literary criticism, and even a short list of parodies (Knight 1896, 8:329–79). The French section was prepared by Émile Legouis, and is very brief, consisting largely of an account of Wordsworth's (rather limited) influence on French writers (Knight 1896, 8:421–32). For the American section, Knight enlisted an American member of the Wordsworth Society, Cynthia Morgan St. John of Ithaca, New York, the great Wordsworth collector, whose collection later would form the heart of the Cornell Wordsworth collection. Now, it is clear from even a cursory look at these bibliographies that there was no overarching methodology governing their compilation: each has different levels of detail and different sub-categories, and the sub-categories are not always clearly distinguished from each other. St. John's findings are the most valuable: she begins with "American Editions of Wordsworth," including the initial appearance of Wordsworth's verse in America in Joseph Dennie's literary journal *The Port Folio* (Knight 1896, 8:383–94). She follows that with a section of "Reprints and Books, both English and American," by which she means pirated American printings of British publications, and she attempts to give a full account of reviews and criticism of Wordsworth in American periodicals, from 1801–1896. She even lists records of American visits to Wordsworth, poems written about him, and some unpublished lectures (Knight 1896, 8:394–420). Her bibliography laid the foundation for every subsequent study of Wordsworth's transatlantic influence.

St. John's efforts were also a dry run for a comprehensive bibliography of Wordsworth, a project she worked on for three decades, and one that, if completed and published, would have permanently established her place as a major Wordsworth scholar, and might have saved Thomas Wise from a smidgen of well-deserved infamy. In the summer of 1909, however, as she was correcting the galley proofs of her introduction, a fire broke out in her summer house near Ithaca, destroying it and the full manuscript of her bib-

3. See also Stephen Gill's chapter on Knight in *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221–40.

liography (Broughton ix; Healey vi). Shortly afterwards, Thomas Wise informed her, with his customary aggressive aplomb, that he was about to publish his own Wordsworth bibliography, and there would be no need for hers (Healey vi). So we lost St. John's labor of love, and received in its stead the slippery machinations of a thief and a forger.

Wise's first bibliography of Wordsworth, *A Bibliography of the Writings of William Wordsworth*, was privately printed in 1916; it was revised in 1927 in *Two Lake Poets*, and revised again for the full catalogue of his Ashley Library in 1930 (Reed xi). All three bibliographies include a description of an "1846" foolscap octavo pamphlet entitled "To the Queen," which Carter and Pollard later proved to be a forgery (Reed 581-83).⁴ Cynthia St. John purchased her copy directly from Wise.⁵ His bibliographies also include an 1844 quarto bifolium entitled "Verses Composed at the Request of Jane Wallis Penfold," which Reed calls "of uncertain status" (i.e. perhaps another forgery) (Reed 1145), and there are numerous other bits and pieces of dubious provenance, which cast a long shadow of suspicion upon even Wise's legitimate entries. If, as Samuel Johnson put it, the lexicographer is a harmless drudge, Thomas J. Wise is an object lesson that the drudgery of the unscrupulous bibliographer can wreak havoc, on both scholarship and the antiquarian book trade. His catalogue of swindles and perversions—that of the Ashley Library—and his theft of hundreds of leaves from British Library holdings haunt us to this day.

Wise's usurpation of Cynthia St. John's bibliographical researches gives poignancy to George Harris Healey's catalogue of *The Cornell Wordsworth Collection* (1957), a work that has stood for over 50 years as the most trustworthy and most complete of the Wordsworth bibliographies. It is, of course, the bibliography of her own collection that she was never able to publish, expanded to include 2500 more items that Cornell had subsequently acquired, and aided by almost 50 years of new discoveries, as scholars and collectors began to scour secondhand bookshops the world over, hoping to find various Wordsworthian black tulips. It was also aided by the standardization of bibliographic description, promulgated by Ronald McKerrow, W. W. Greg, and Fredson Bowers, so that the inconsistencies of earlier bibliographies have been largely eliminated (Healey vi-vii). Like Wise before him, Healey compared items in the Cornell collection with similar items elsewhere, principally those in British and American public collections, most of which he had personally inspected, and many of which

4. John Carter and Graham Pollard, *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth-century Pamphlets* (New York: Scribners, 1934), 355-56.

5. Reed, 583, quotes a letter from Wise to St. John, dated 30 June 1916, describing the pamphlet and offering it for sale. This letter is part of the Cornell Wordsworth Collection, catalogued by Healey (416) as #3080.

are located and distinguished from Cornell's own holdings. He lists, for instance, four of the five copies of the Bristol *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) which contain Coleridge's "Lewti," tells us where to find them, and distinguishes them from each other, according to their bibliographical features (Healey 3-4). Thus the Healey catalogue has the weight and feel of a comprehensive bibliography, at least for works published through 1850, the year of Wordsworth's death. But for posthumously-published works, he gives only minimal description, and only attends to the particular holdings of the Cornell collection.

In the Preface to his new bibliography, Mark Reed pays generous tribute to Healey: "his bibliography," writes Reed, "is the richest and most dependable source of information about physical features of printings through that of the 1850 *Prelude*." But our knowledge of the lifetime printings has increased since 1957, as has our interest in "the larger and more diverse array of physical and editorial constructions" that bore the author's name "Wordsworth" on the cover or title page (Reed xii). And so Reed has attempted to provide rich and dependable information about separate publications of Wordsworth material from 1793 to 1930. He chooses 1930 as an end date because it is

the conclusion of the first decade in which the majority of new books of Wordsworth's writings were intended for scholastic and scholarly markets, where his steadiest readership would remain henceforward. One of these new books was Ernest de Selincourt's landmark edition of . . . *The Prelude*. These events mark the logical completion of an elaborate century-and-a-half evolution of relationships between Wordsworth's presence in print, his public, and his publishers. . . . (Reed xii)

Reed is not just extending the studies of Healey and Wise, or simply applying a kind of post-Bowers bibliographical rigor to Wordsworth. He is in fact including a wealth of information about the literary marketplace, about print runs and sales and costs of books, about copyright law and how that affected the texts available to publishers, about paper and watermarks, and about print technology in a time period when that technology underwent radical transformation, the most radical being the shift from handset type to stereotype, and next to that the shift from hand-made rag paper to machine-made pulp-based products. Reed's *Bibliography of William Wordsworth* thus contains within it indispensable documentary evidence for the history of the publishing industry from the late 18th to the mid 20th century.

Consider, for instance, the following narrative, sketched out in Reed's introduction (ci-ciii) and described in immense bibliographic detail on pages 277-98. In 1857, copyright expired on the first collective edition of

Wordsworth's *Poetical Works*, the two-volume edition of 1815. At the same time, copyright had expired on *The Excursion* (1814), *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815), and a year later, *The Thanksgiving Ode* volume of 1816. Wordsworth's family and his publisher, Edward Moxon, attempted to head off this potential dilemma by issuing a new collective edition of his works, in 6 volumes, adding the new material of the Fenwick notes, to make it attractive to new buyers (but hardly inexpensive). In that same year, the Edinburgh publisher Gall and Inglis published a poetical works of Wordsworth, based on the out-of-copyright texts, in one handy volume. "This edition," writes Reed, "gave birth to a large progeny" (Reed ci). That is, other publishers began appropriating the Gall and Inglis texts, slightly rearranged, in their own one-volume "Wordsworths." Gall and Inglis begat Routledge, and Routledge begat Nimmo and Nelson; Nimmo begat Dicks, and one of them, which one it is hard to say, begat an American News Company edition across the pond. By 1890, Reed concludes, Gall and Inglis and Routledge alone "had produced at least 124,000" copies of *Wordsworth's Poetical Works* from more or less the same stereotype plates (Reed ci). So Moxon's relatively expensive 6-volume Wordsworth, which was the Wordsworth family's Wordsworth, had to compete with a wide range of Gall family descendants, and because those descendants were "cheap, cheap, cheap" (to quote James T. Fields),⁶ they "dominated the busy, complex Wordsworth market for three decades" (Reed ciii).

Now the "Gall family" (and this is Reed's phrase, by the way, reflecting I am sure the Wordsworth family's attitude towards it) is primarily a commercial publishing venture. Matthew Arnold's *Poems of Wordsworth* (Macmillan, 1879) is a more complex kettle of fish. Arnold's "Wordsworth" is a selection of Wordsworth's poetry by a poet and critic who, as the Warton Professor of Poetry at Oxford, had unusual authority, an authority amplified by the fact that he had known the poet since his childhood days in Rydal. His volume is thus an editorial and critical construction of Wordsworth, and one that had enormous influence, for, as Reed notes, it became "the best-selling edition of WW's poetry" for the next 50 years, and was still in print as late as 1988 (Reed 561). Reed's account of this publication is astonishingly full, both in the 20 pages of bibliographical description (Reed 559-78) and in the narrative account of it in his introduction (Reed cv-cix).⁷ For instance, he tells us, in detail, where Arnold derived his texts of Wordsworth's poetry, and gives an account of his editorial interventions, the most notable of which is the poem he calls "Mar-

6. So Fields described the Ticknor & Fields Diamond Poets editions in a letter of 1866 to John Greenleaf Whittier. Quoted in Thomas Franklin Currier, *A Bibliography of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 107.

7. See also Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 99-101.

garet," an excerpt from the 1832 text of *Excursion* 1, minus the Wanderer's biography, and adding dozens of lines from Book 2. Reed also examines, skeptically, Arnold's rationale for assembling a selection of Wordsworth's verse. "As Arnold explained," writes Reed, "with condescension and heavy irony"

almost all of Wordsworth's "really first rate work" was written between 1798 and 1808; "*The Excursion* and the *Prelude*, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means [his] best work"; Wordsworth's best work was to be found in his shorter poems; and Wordsworth's classification of his poems . . . was based in "mental physiology" and were far-fetched and unsatisfactory. (Reed cv)

So Arnold's selection of 165 Wordsworth poems, some of them Arnoldian constructions, and all of them arranged according to an Arnoldian system, seeks to clear away these impediments, so that he can teach readers to love Wordsworth again and restore his waning popularity. Never mind that, if sales data are any measure of popularity, Wordsworth's was at an all-time height. And never mind that Wordsworth's classification system makes at least as much sense as the vaguely classical generic divisions of Arnold's volume. And never mind that, despite Arnold's assertion about the Great Decade, over a third of his selection is of later poems (a fact that his readers could not know, since he provided no dates). Partly because of its modest cost, convenient size, and attractive appearance, and partly because of the authority of the Arnold name and the fluency of his rhetoric, Arnold's Wordsworth was a smashing success: by 1930, Macmillan had published nearly 133,000 copies of the collection, and, as Reed notes, "non-parental printings were numerous also," especially in America, where Harper, Crowell, and later Macmillan's American branch published thousands of copies; in addition, there were classroom and academic texts that reprinted Arnold's selection, wholly or in part, often without acknowledgement, and on both sides of the Atlantic books like *Helps to the Study of Arnold's Wordsworth* went through multiple printings (Reed cviii). If there is a Coleridge's Wordsworth that we need to shake off, to see what the poet was actually doing, Reed clearly suggests that there is also an Arnold's Wordsworth, whose influence is more widely pervasive, with which we still haven't fully come to grips.

Reed's exemplary work with lifetime editions deserves special notice. He is the only person since Joseph Cottle to have examined all 14 surviving copies of the Bristol imprint of *Lyrical Ballads*, including the copy in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, New Zealand, and he is the first to give full and accurate bibliographical descriptions of each of them, laying to rest such lingering questions as whether there was a Bristol title page list-

ing Cottle as publisher (no), and whether the “Lewti” contents page was printed on the same paper as the rest of the volume (yes, in spite of D. F. Foxon’s assertion in 1954).⁸ Reed also casts out chimerical demons conjured up by T. J. Wise, such as the Ashley Library *Lyrical Ballads* London imprint with its so-called cancel in the “G” signature (it is not a cancel; it is a Wise sophistication, used to disguise a missing page) (Reed 7–12). Reed also brings together, for the first time, a bibliographical description of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) with William St. Clair’s brilliant discovery of the printing records of Charles Whittingham & Co., in which the records of the printing of the “Michael” cancel are preserved,⁹ and he sorts out the other thorny issues of the printing of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* with a combination of thoroughness and logical clarity that is genuinely mind-bending (see Appendix 1:1169–1172). The peculiarities of the 1820 faux-*Lyrical Ballads* (consisting of the second volumes of 1800, 1805, or *Poems, in Two Volumes*, with a cancel title leaf) are explained thus: they are “carelessly executed contrivances,” Reed opines, following J. E. Wells, “by the publisher to sell off leftover sheets from those printings.”¹⁰

Or possibly they were the enterprise of a middleman who had somehow obtained them from Longman. . . . Such gauche attempts at deception would seem unlikely from so experienced and respectable a publisher as Longman, however, and an impostor would of course be more likely than Longman to misspell a house name in the title imprint, as, here, “Browne” for “Brown”—although a dogged prosecutor might argue that the error was planted to prove innocence at need. (Reed 56–57)

Among the lifetime works receiving bibliographical description for the first time are the 1843 and 1844 broadsides, “Sacred to the Memory of Robert Southey,”¹¹ a Lee Priory Press printing of “Lament of Mary Queen of Scots,” and a conjectural offprint of “Epitaph for Owen Lloyd,” sent to Christopher Wordsworth, Jr., in 1841 (Reed 66, 147–48, 173–78). Reed has sorted out the various lifetime chapbook printings of “We Are Seven” and “Lucy Gray,” and corrected the dating of the most famous of them,

8. Reed’s bibliographical description should be supplemented with his essay “The First Title Page of *Lyrical Ballads*,” *Studies in Bibliography* 51 (1998): 230–40. See also D. F. Foxon, “The Printing of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798,” *The Library* 9 (1954): 221–41.

9. William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 180.

10. J. E. Wells, “Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, 1820,” *Philological Quarterly* 17 (1938): 398–402.

11. As Nicholas Roe has noted (*TLS* [6 December 2013]: 8), the engraver has removed the monument from the church and placed it on the lawn of Greta Hall.

Kendrew of York's "The Little Maid and the Gentleman," by some fifteen years (Reed 99–100).¹²

I close this review with a disclaimer and a short anecdote. I am one of Mark Reed's former students, and contributed, in a very small way, to a handful of his bibliographical entries. In July 1998, we worked side by side in the old Treasure Room (now defunct) in Baker Library at Dartmouth College, he on Wordsworth bibliography and I on George Ticknor, and he examined a few books from my own collection at the same time. We went out to dinner that evening, and as the wine was poured, he wished us a "happy Tintern Abbey day"—and I realized then that it was July 13th, the 200th anniversary, and he'd been planning to celebrate with us all along and never said a word about it. I doubt that any of us have bottles in our cellars from 1770 or 1850, or even 1857, the birthday of the eldest of the "Gall family." Nonetheless, we should all raise a glass to Mark Reed for this labor of love, and his finest achievement.

Bruce E. Graver
Providence College

12. Healey had tentatively dated the chapbook to 1820, based on Helen Hughes "Two Wordsworth Chapbooks," *Modern Philology* 25 (1927): 207–10. Reed's redating is based on a comparison with another Kendrew chapbook, *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin*, and the arguments of R. H. Davis, *Kendrew of York* (Collingham: Wetherby, 1988), 43–45.