Introduction

Re-collection's Intranquility

I wish there were not the necessity for doing something to increase your income, which your letter too surely shows there is. The question that a bookseller will ask is not whether it be a work of merit, but whether it is likely to sell. Without this assurance the praise which I should bestow – to wit – that it is a work of great power and promise, would not suffice […] unless the bookseller himself saw reason to expect a remunerating sale. You can do no harm by offering it to a publisher, but I am afraid you will not find one who will take upon himself the risque of publication, much less advance any thing for the copyright.

(Robert Southey to James Heraud, June 1, 1823, *RSNL* 2:246–7)

However much they may have striven to write works of power and promise, poets of the Romantic period in their daily lives wrote equally often – and with similar intensity – about the business of literature. And, like the Romantics, literary studies has turned increasingly to this same subject to understand the conditions under which Romantic writing was produced and received. With Robert Southey, we have come to accept the fact of traffic between the commercial and the cultural, and have begun to study their sustained and fruitful relation. An informed literary sociologist, Southey in his letter to James Heraud addresses the tension between these two realms directly even as he sets the terms by which one may be converted into the other. Implicit in Southey's analysis and visible in stock epithets like "work of merit" and "risque of publication" is his certainty that Heraud's book, no matter how much it may be eventually marketed as a "work of great power and promise," will see publication only if publishers feel relatively certain of its "remunerating sale." The choice presented – that is, if we attend to Southey's lesson – is one of self-publication or self-commodification, where poetic genius must come into conflict with whatever forces drive the sale of a book.

Romanticism, Self-Canonization, and the Business of Poetry explores this collision between the aesthetic and the economic, mapping the shifting relation that poets of the Romantic period had to their own intellectual

property and to that shared property of the nation, the canon. It does so through a practice I call "re-collection," which I define as the authorized, transformational reprinting of works that have appeared earlier in some other form. Re-collection in this book encompasses both a kind of literary activity and its bibliographic expression. Presenting itself as the polar opposite of a piracy, it partakes of the anthology and of the collected works of dead authors while differing from each in key ways. Sometimes adding new material to previously published works and sometimes not, a re-collection is never merely a new edition of an older book. Rather, it gathers its component parts and presents them in new ways, transforming the assembled contents – through combination and juxtaposition, revision and reordering, repricing and repackaging – so as effectively to produce a new work. If, as N. Katherine Hayles has noted, "To change the physical form of the artifact is […] profoundly to transform the metaphoric network structuring the relation of word to world," then re-collection is necessarily a dynamic process, one involving the full cast of characters and technologies that constitute manuscript and print culture in the Romantic period.[1]

In this sense, re-collection provides a site for considering the materiality of books and writerly subjectivity simultaneously – both as occasions for, and as expressions of, literary activity. It also offers a chance to produce a more capacious account of literary production and reception by shifting our critical gaze from initial composition to what comes after. The story I tell in this book, then, is neither of original production nor of the posthumous afterlives of texts;[2] rather, it is of textual reproduction and remaking by the living. It is the activities of books, poets, and publishers *after* first publication that interest me: after a poem or collection has found its way into the marketplace, after it has been initially packaged and sold, noticed and neglected, praised and condemned. This, effectively, is where re-collection begins, when writers and publishers begin assessing how given works might be better presented in altered garb or with a revised set of claims. It is also arguably where literary history begins, since books in circulation have a habit of leading lives of their own. However unanticipated by writers and publishers, these bookish lives come to stand in as proofs of authorial intention for readers and reviewers, creating in their turn the need for productive response. In a period famous for its exploding readership and brutally partisan press, publication could produce surprising results. One need only contrast the careers of Byron and Barbauld, or of Scott and Shelley, to understand how wide the divide could be between the commercially successful and the critically derided poet. In such a

climate, re-collection held out to writers the prospect of a second chance, presenting the possibility of redirecting earlier work to more profitable or prestigious ends.

Part of this book's project, then, is to present a more dynamic relation between writers and readers than has hitherto been offered by reminding us of the productive nature of literary reception and of the receptivity of writers and publishers to the market. Here, I take my cue from, and offer a corrective to, William St. Clair's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2004), which famously expresses frustration with earlier models, particularly of Robert Darnton, Thomas Adams, and Nicolas Barker, of the lives of books and the interrelations of writers, publishers, and readers. Darnton's foundational essay, "What Is the History of Books?" (1982), for example, begins his description of the life cycle of books with the author, describing literary production "as a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher, […] the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader," whose responses in turn shape the demand for subsequent new works.[3] The problem with such author-led models, St. Clair argues, is that they fail to see beyond initial publication, since "postulating a feedback between readers and authors can only be useful if we […] exclude all but initial readers."[4] Alongside them he offers a "Reader-led model," which imagines the collective demands of readers driving literary production, and which places publishers in the largely reactive position of seeking out texts that can satisfy those desires. Taken together, he concludes, the two models "may enable some of the clearest underlying patterns to emerge."[5] My own account seeks through a change in critical focus to merge these two models, placing initial publication and reception at the beginning rather than at the end of a communications circuit that extends to subsequent re-collection and even through multiple iterations of it. Doing so, I believe, allows us to imagine a feedback loop between readers and writers that includes all readers, whether of first or later editions. More fundamentally, it directs critical focus back onto writers and publishers while at the same time reimagining them as responsive to the market and tactical in their behavior toward it.

Re-collection thus functions as a kind of reception-to-reception, reminding us that acts of republication, even as they are subject to changing contexts, also create new scenarios in their turn. In this fundamental way, they resemble a host of other aesthetic collections, from commonplace books to museum exhibits, in which the act of assembling disparate pieces creates a new setting for cohesion and identity. As Sigmund Freud posited and Jean Baudrillard, Susan Stewart, and others have subsequently argued,

collections are powerful representative forms.[6] Usually they serve a double purpose, representing an ideal whole through a selective assemblage of parts while providing a vehicle for self-fashioning. Susan Pearce's *On Collecting* (1995) captures this constitutive function nicely, defining collecting as an essentially imaginative activity and collections as "metaphor[s] intended to create meanings which help to make [...] identity."[7] The various items may come from scattered sources, but their status as a collection at once communicates an argument (that the parts of the collection stand for some whole) and an implicit portrait (of the mind that brought them together). In this way, collections may come to represent and even stand in for their collectors, whether they inhabit museum, estate, or book.

More important to my argument, however, are the ways re-collections depart from other acts of assemblage in the claims they make about themselves. At once authored and authorized, re-collections are necessarily representations of an *authorial* self, captured between the boards of a codex. Unlike most other collections, which customarily present objects assembled but not created by the collector, re-collections present artist and compiler, writer and collector, as one.[8] They thus encompass at once a specific kind of commodity and a particular kind of authorial activity, where writers become editors and compilers not of others' works but of their own. One might argue, of course, that this is true of most published books, at least those claiming authors on their title pages. The difference lies, I believe, in the *curatorial* nature of re-collecting and its accompanying project of remaking already existing selves: its practice of taking objects already in the public eye and giving them new forms and meanings. Such acts take on a double significance since they provide vehicles for transforming the cultural status not only of works but also of the authors appearing on their title pages.

Re-collection thus provides an arena for thinking about the relation between self-commodification and self-canonization in ways that foreground both the presence of writers and their compromised agency in literary production. Writers, after all, become most aware of their limited power in the marketplace when their books are initially released into the world. As Arjun Appadurai, Bill Brown, and others have reminded us, objects can merit their own biographies, and poetic collections are no exception to this phenomenon.[9] As commodities, they possess their own explicit materiality and status, their values changing with the fluctuations of markets and contexts.[10] Where books do not entirely fail, writers and publishers can respond to initial sales and reviews by asking whether shifts in strategy or changes in packaging are desirable. These can be especially

fraught moments, since they compound the anxieties accompanying any act of publication with those attending authorial refashioning. My analyses, therefore, focus on the productive nature of this tension while canvasing the full range of political, commercial, and biographical contexts that help to shape this revisionary impulse. Part of my decision to concentrate primarily on poetry, in fact, stems from a desire to counteract our longstanding tendency to elevate the genre and, in the process, separate it from the forces that shape its composition, promotion, and sale. Focusing on acts of re-collection, I believe, can illuminate the historical relation between these twin practices of generic elevation and dissociation. Equally important, it can capture writers in all their compromised venality even as it provides a material basis for understanding how authorship could function as such a dominant and idealizing category in literary culture in these years. These issues become most stark, of course, when a living writer's works are re-collected for what appears to be a final time, anticipating that moment when the corpus must speak alone, and for itself.

For these reasons, re-collections inevitably foreground the choices that shape literary corpuses and careers. Looking back to Southey's letter to Heraud, we find these decisions to be stark, limited, pointedly gendered, and self-conscious. They also are necessarily dialectic: informed by a knowledge of one's own limited bargaining position; shaped by the necessity of earning a living and providing for dependents; produced by the dynamics of social authorship and the collaborative nature of book publishing itself; and structured by authors and publishers negotiating with one another even as they respond to the decrees of readers. If Southey's letter teaches us anything, it is that authors and publishers learn from experience, and that past acts and present contingencies inevitably shape the forms that future books will take. Still, it is in the remaining paragraphs of the letter that we find Southey most emphatically connecting the business of poetry to the art of constructing a literary career. Having advised Heraud on publishers and copyrights, he next asks how the work in question – a long poem on the Roman emperor Nero – might enhance or hinder Heraud's public reputation:

> Nor am I sure that eventually it would be serviceable to you to have it before the world. With all its merit it is a juvenile performance; and you have already given proof of poetical genius. I am glad to hear of your lecturing, because it leads you to prose composition, and it [is] by writing for Magazines that you may with most facility help out your ways and means. But your great object with this view should be to get a piece upon the stage. Something of the mixed drama rather than tragedy, of an attractive, Romantic character, designed to please, rather than to affect too deeply. (*RSNL* 2:246–7)

Certainly the ghosts of the pirated *Wat Tyler* (1817) and other juvenile performances lurk behind Southey's advice to publish with caution.[11] Equally suggestive are his unspoken assumptions: his almost programmatic sense of authorial husbandry that wishes to limit Heraud to a single "juvenile performance" displaying appropriate "proof of poetical genius." The implication here is plain: as Heraud already has proven his genius, he cannot with propriety publish another juvenile performance, particularly as he is now a married and mature man. In this way, Southey's advice on managing authorship carries in it both a biographical and generic logic, one in which poetry functions as the natural domain of youthful writers who then expand into other genres as they mature.

What complicates Southey's sense of authorial self-development and generic hierarchy – not to mention increasing his bemused sympathy for Heraud's plight – is the business of literature. Produced by an early marriage, Heraud's need for income mirrors Southey's own situation a quarter century earlier. This common enough life event produces profoundly ambivalent (or, to use Southey's term, "mixed") advice, guided as much by considerations of earning power as by cultural prestige. The problem becomes one of finding a single "great object" that will satisfy both economies, one that will allow Heraud and his publishers to present a highly remunerative work as one written for posterity. Southey's advice reflects both sets of constraints. For the professional writer, he reflects, magazine prose stands as a necessary evil, garnering little status and sizable pay. However prestigious it may be, poetry still stands as a risky venture since few booksellers will advance money by purchasing a copyright. Thus, Southey proposes drama as Heraud's best available middle path, since penning a stage hit will bring at once greater fame and better remuneration than writing for periodicals. Even within this single generic solution, however, similar tensions remain. Sensing that a man of Heraud's ambition will head directly to that most prestigious of dramatic modes, verse tragedy, Southey again recommends compromise: "[s]omething of […] an attractive, Romantic character, designed to please, rather than to affect too deeply." Were money not a factor, Southey might advise differently; but, as money nearly always is, his thinking on the proper composition of a literary career raises an array of questions emblematic to this study. At what stage of a career should one publish juvenile works or reprint earlier ones? Should these appear with new work, with one's collected works, or as separate publications? Should they construct their authors as consistent, contradictory, developing, or essential? How might such publications allow literary producers to reconstitute already existing public selves?

These are the sort of quandaries that interest me: when there is no certain way of knowing the future regard of readers or posterity; when one can only inscribe one's claims for notice by assembling out of existing works a unified body capable of standing in for the author. They become all the more compelling, I believe, in light of the powerful interpretive strategies developed in the last few decades by historians of the book, their practices aptly described by Meredith McGill as "a cross-pollination of the methods of bibliography, social history, and cultural history."[12] In describing how the business of literature shapes poetic authorship, production, and reproduction in an age when publishing practices were changing drastically, my primary goal is to explain why specific books entered the marketplace as they did. Taking this cultural field of the marketplace seriously means striving to treat books both as sociological objects and as cultural agents – as multiplying meaning in ways unanticipated by those producing them.[13] It also means taking seriously a caveat of Leah Price, who has wryly called for a scholarship more "attenti[ve] to the circulation of things" than of selves:

> No matter how energetically they distance themselves from the aesthetic, book historians remain as attached as literary historians to narratives centered around human agents: the author, the editor, the reader, or (even more literally) the literary agent. Such scholarly accounts mirror the structure of their sources [… and] recapitulate a more diffuse tradition – both religious (specifically Augustan) and literary (specifically Wordsworthian) – which relies on the encounter with a book to account for the development of a self.[14]

One might extend this caution further by applying it to the book-agent relation itself, especially as our collective tendency to narrate encounters with books as episodes of subject formation is, if anything, constitutive of Romanticism as an ideological legacy. At the same time, however, I would argue for the wisdom of redefining the terms of Price's encounter. The critical engagement, I believe, lies not only between books and readers but also between books and writers – or, more precisely, in how writers consider their books after they become objects released into the world through the medium of publication. If we cannot talk about Romantic books without supplying accompanying stories of authorial agency, the reason stems from the ways Romantic writers made (and then remade) their books to stand as extensions of their public personae. Like the emblematic poet recollecting a moment of powerful feeling in tranquility, what is "Wordsworthian" about Romantic book production is precisely this dual tendency: first, to personify books by considering them as representations of authorial selves;

and second, to consider those books and selves as always requiring further revision. Re-collections may project an essential author, but they do so by engaging with writerly selves that are anything but unified: revisable and re-combinable rather than necessary. Put another way, "recollection" has long stood as a constitutive term of artistic consciousness in Romantic poetics because of its ability to confirm one's presence and identity through memory. The same may be said for *re-collection* since, where books possess the power to represent authors and careers, re-collections must bear the burden of remaking them. From their size, fonts, and paper to the ordering of their contents, few texts are more subject to literary convention or to the claims of king and country than are re-collections. Even fewer – not even autobiography, I would argue – capture the nuances and internal divisions of literary production more starkly. My own study, therefore, does not seek to replace the history of a specific kind of self (the Romantic poet) with the history of a thing (the re-collection). Rather, it insists on their necessary association and periodic conflation, mapping how self and thing, writer and work, became at once entwined and essential to the building of literary reputation.

For this reason, I distinguish between "writers" and "authors" in these pages. The former term refers to individuals who work with publishers to create and publish literary texts. The latter denotes the public, institutional figures that appear on the title pages of said texts. This distinction between writers and authors becomes most stark when previously published work is revised and repackaged, since poets who engage in acts of re-collection customarily wish to reach new readers by rebranding themselves and, through that revision of the authorial self, raising the status and value of their writings generally. Whether driven by a love of money or fame, they do so usually by re-dressing a given work as a particular kind of "classic" and themselves as candidates worthy of monumentalization. The stakes of such acts of self-canonization are particularly high – in part because eighteenth- and nineteenth-century canonization rituals call for candidates of modesty and distinterestedness, and in part because the past literary lives of individual writers so often intrude on the scene of present publication. No matter how insistent writers may be that their newly assembled corpuses transcend earlier versions, a re-collection remains one publishing event within an evolving career. As the epigraphs that open this book from Jameson and Stewart eloquently state, a re-collection may impose a new context on previously published writings and earlier authorial selves, but this does not mean these earlier versions ever go away quietly or entirely. To borrow a formulation from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, even as they ask

readers to look *beyond* the past and ignore earlier versions of a text and their accompanying authorial selves, re-collecting writers cannot help but be aware that their new version will be read *beside* rather than in place of earlier publications.[15] It should not be surprising, then, that the revisionary strategies of re-collecting writers so often attempt to erase the past record of publication by dressing older works in the newest, most sumptuous clothing. At times, the activity takes on the trappings of a bibliographic masquerade, demanding every article of costume the printed book can provide, from long subscription lists, testimonies, powerful dedicatees, and advertisements to prefaces, frontispieces, authors' lives, and appendices. As each of my chapters demonstrates, such bibliographic devices occur most frequently and elaborately where books declare themselves "works," and where living writers by extension declare themselves authors of stature and importance.[16] Taken as a whole, my case studies dramatize Romantic poets becoming institutional authors through specific revisionary practices, and through the commercial medium of a specific kind of book.

Such an approach, I hope, produces a more worldly (and sympathetic) depiction of writers as keenly aware of the connections between cultural and commercial activity. It also expands lines of inquiry posited by Leo Braudy and established by Andrew Bennett, whose analysis of Romantic writers' statements about posterity informs my own. Within the broader historical sweep of his study of fame, Braudy directs his interest to the benefits of idealizing "neglected genius," through which "the writer can distance himself from the competitiveness of the present by asserting his solidarity with an unappreciated fellow artist who has been canonized by an untimely death."[17] Bennett takes this figure still further by making it underwrite not just early nineteenth-century representations of the poet but also what he calls Romantic "posthumous writing," the attitude of writing for posterity rather than for present readers.[18] This rhetorical posture, he argues, "is central to the project of Romantic poetics" because it conceives of "the work of art as an expression of self uncontaminated by market forces, undiluted by appeals to the corrupt prejudices and desires of (bourgeois, contaminating, fallible, feminine, temporal, mortal) readers."[19] If my own arguments diverge from their accounts, it is because my primary interest lies in these more "corrupt […] desires": in the *tactics* of literary production and reproduction that constitute authorship rather than in representations of the figure of the poet. As my individual case studies show, however much they may have fantasized about producing uncontaminated art freed from economic and social context, Romantic writers viewed their writings proprietarily and their published books as

commodities. However much they periodically distanced themselves from publishers and contemporary readers, in practice they worked closely with the former and racked their brains for new ways of courting the latter. Here, my methodology dovetails fairly closely with that of H. J. Jackson, whose recent study of posthumous fame, though appearing too late fully to inform my argument, confirms my own decision to foreground the post-publication responses of writers and publishers to readers. Jackson focuses primarily on outcomes, demonstrating the relative arbitrariness of canon formation after authors' deaths across a range of case studies.[20] In contrast, I dwell chiefly on the actions of the living – my desire being to tell a fuller and different story about the relation of poets and publishers to one another, to the literary marketplace, and to a radically expanding printed canon. My goal, therefore, is to address questions of posthumous fame while foregrounding why living poets shaped their collections for the immediate market as they did. If their curated literary corpuses tell us nothing else, they document ongoing, sometimes career-long tugs of war between lucre and fame, profit and reputation, and self-commodification and self-canonization.

Illuminating as such scenes of writing are in and of themselves, they also provide apt vehicles for revising dominant accounts of authorship in the Romantic period – particularly those inspired by Michel Foucault, who in "What Is an Author?" (1977) called for a wholesale reconsideration of authorship's legal and economic foundations.[21] Responding to Foucault's challenge, cultural historians have privileged institutional ideas of authorship over more distributed ones, and legal explanations at the expense of economic ones. As a result, they have located modern authorship's emergence in the courts, in legislative reforms of copyright, and in the burgeoning periodical presses that sought to influence both. While powerfully linking eighteenth-century aesthetic theory to nineteenth-century legal practice, such accounts have tended to treat "Romanticism" teleologically, as a site of historical convergence and ideological excess.[22] My own study seeks to correct this portrait, which too often has placed Romantic writers, especially poets, in a false opposition with publishers and other literary producers of less elite status, resulting in a tendency to represent authors as economically naive and necessarily aloof from the production and marketing of their own books.

Portraying poets as both artists and interested economic agents, I believe, challenges accounts of authorship in the Romantic period not only by reconnecting dominant models of poetic genius to the business