William Wordsworth, Second-Generation Romantic provides a truly comprehensive reading of “late” Wordsworth and the full arc of his career from 1814 to 1840, revealing that his major poems after Waterloo contest poetic and political issues with his younger contemporaries: Keats, Shelley, and Byron. Refuting conventional models of influence, where Wordsworth “fathers” the younger poets, Cox demonstrates how Wordsworth’s later writing evolved in response to “second-generation” romanticism. After exploring the ways in which his younger contemporaries rewrote his Excursion, this volume examines how Wordsworth’s “Thanksgiving Ode” enters into a complex conversation with Leigh Hunt and Byron; how the delayed publication of Peter Bell could be read as a reaction to the Byronic hero; how the older poet’s River Duddon sonnets respond to Shelley’s “Mont Blanc”; and how his later volumes, particularly “Memorials of a Tour in Italy, 1837,” engage in a complicated erasure of poets who both followed and predeceased him.

Jeffrey N. Cox is Distinguished Professor of English and Humanities at the University of Colorado Boulder. He is the author and editor of ten volumes, including Romanticism in the Shadow of War (2014) and the award-winning Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School (1998).
This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s, a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those “great national events” that were “almost daily taking place”: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad, and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion, and literature were reworked in texts such as Frankenstein and Biographia Literaria; gender relations in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Don Juan; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; and poetic form, content, and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of commentary or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of literature and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge University Press, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

See the end of the book for a complete list of published titles.
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 
SECOND-GENERATION 
ROMANTIC

Contesting Poetry after Waterloo

JEFFREY N. COX

University of Colorado Boulder
This book is dedicated to

Amy

and to our “second generation,”

Julia, Emma, and Claire.

In thanks for all the love and joy you have given me, early
and late.
## Contents

List of Figures ............................... viii  
Acknowledgments ........................... ix  
List of Abbreviations ..................... xii  

Introduction ................................ 1  

1  Cockney Excursions ............................ 34  
   Coda: Laodamia Responds .................... 66  

2  Wordsworth’s “Thanksgiving Ode” ............... 78  
   An Engaged Poetics and the Horrors of War .... 78  

3  “This Potter-Don-Juan” ........................ 110  
   *Peter Bell* in 1819 .......................... 110  

4  Thinking Rivers .............................. 129  
   The Flow of Influence, Wordsworth–Coleridge–Shelley 129  

5  Late “Late Wordsworth” ..................... 157  
   I Retrospection and Re-collection ............ 157  
   II Contesting Italy ........................... 170  

   Postscript Wordsworth in 1850 ................ 200  
   *The Prelude,* “this posthumous yet youthful work” 200  

Notes ........................................ 205  
Select Bibliography ......................... 252  
Index ........................................ 264
Figures

0.1 Benjamin Robert Haydon. *Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem* (1814–20). Wordsworth’s portrait, with bowed head, appears between the two columns on the right, next to the sneering Voltaire. 457 x 396 cm. Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Cincinnati. Photo provided by: The Athenaeum of Ohio in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.

2.1 Anon. [J. Marks pub.]. “The European Pantomime” (March 1815?). Hand-colored etching on paper, 25.8 x 35.5 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum.
Acknowledgments

This book was a long time in the making, though it finished rather quickly thanks to research support from the University of Colorado Boulder and its Provost, Russ Moore, which gave me time to complete the book as I returned to the faculty after many, many years in administration. It now seems a long time ago that several people helped generate the initial thinking that went into this book. In another century, back in 1997, Jill Heydt-Stevenson, one of the amazing team for the Cornell Wordsworth, asked me to join a panel on late Wordsworth for the conference of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism. I had never really thought about late Wordsworth and did not think much about him again for years. Then, Julia Carlson asked me to address a special conference on Benjamin Robert Haydon in 2008 where I gave a talk on “Wordsworth, Haydon, and the Cockney School” that first sketched out my thinking about Wordsworth and the younger poets. Other colleagues offered me other moments to contemplate related issues. Nick Roe gave me an opportunity to talk about the Cockney School and The Excursion at the Wordsworth Summer Conference of 2010, and Tim Fulford and the 2018 Coleridge Conference allowed me to think through the sonnets on the River Duddon. Many thanks to Tom Torremans for putting on the unforgettable “Transnational Reception of Waterloo in the 19th Century” Conference at Brussels in June 2015, which included a trip to the battlefield on the 200th anniversary of Waterloo and which allowed me to write about Wordsworth’s “Thanksgiving Ode.”

If these friends gave the initial spark for this book, others were there to keep the energy flowing. The Colorado Romanticism Collaborative – including Thora Brylowe, Jill Heydt-Stevenson, John Stevenson, and Paul Youngquist – form the immediate community of conversation and collaboration that nurtures my work. Our incredible graduate students over the years – including Dana Van Kooy, Terry Robinson, John Leffel, Michele Speitz, Kurtis Hessel, Daniel Larson, ix
Kirstyn Leuner, and Rebecca Schneider—always inspire me by showing what scholarship can become. Advice, friendship, encouragement, and ideas came in many ways and from many people including Mark Lussier, Greg Kucich, Dan White, Tilar Mazzeo, Julie Kipp, Michael Macovski, Julie Carlson, Sonia Hofkosh, Fran Botkin, Talissa Ford, and Jane Stabler. Closer to home were Chris Braider, Peter Knox, Merrill Lessley, David Mapel, Warren Mottee, and Adam Bradley. Others were there at the end. Devoney Looser— with her sharp intellect and unfailing ear—provided essential advice at a moment when the book threatened to stall out. Michael Gamer offered telling criticisms of the final sections of the book. And then my two amazing recent students, Grace Rexroth and Deven Parker, helped sort out all the final details.

I was still at Texas A&M University when I gave that first late Wordsworth paper, and I still draw upon the vibrant intellectual community there including Susan Egenolf, Margaret Ezell, May Ann O’Farrell, Larry Reynolds, and David McWhirter. I have enjoyed support from the University of Colorado’s Center for Humanities and the Arts, including Helmut Müller-Sievers and Paula Anderson. Much of the long gestation of this project took place while I was Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, and I owe a debt to the provosts I served, to the amazing staff with whom I worked, and to an intellectually lively group of academic administrators including William Kaempfer, Bob Boswell, Mike Grant, Mary Kraus, William Kuskin, Ann Schmiesing, Katherine Eggert, and Michele Moses. Beyond the talks already mentioned, I shared portions of this book with a number of other supportive audiences at Arizona State University in November 2015; at meetings of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism in Ottawa in August 2017 and in Chicago in August 2019; at the meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in Orlando in April 2018; and at the Workshop in Nineteenth Century Studies (WINCS) at the University of Toronto in October 2018. I owe thanks to more people from those events than I can name, but they include Phil Shaw, Chuck Rzepka, Timothy Morton, Ron Broglio, Alexander Regier, Angela Esterhammer, Alan Bewell, Anne Mellor, Marjorie Levinson, Stuart Curran, Jerome McGann, Kevin Gilmartin, and William Galperin.

This is the third time I have worked with Cambridge University Press and its Studies in Romanticism Series, and each time has been a real pleasure. The advice and friendship of Jim Chandler, a true leader in the field, have made my work better. I owe a great thanks to Bethany Thomas for supporting this project and seeing it through to publication. The two
anonymous readers gave generous and insightful suggestions; I have tried to do justice to their deep understanding of Wordsworth.


I am finishing this book as we remain in partial quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also facing levels of unemployment not seen since the Great Depression and a rising against racism and in favor of justice, equality, and equity that reminds many of the 1960s. It might seem frivolous right now to publish a book on “late” Wordsworth, but I hope there might be something to learn in this great poet’s struggle to prove the power of poetry to speak to his contemporaries and to address the massive destruction of Waterloo and the risings of the era of Reform, not to mention the inescapable realities of aging and death. My own aging has certainly been made more joyous by my many friends and especially by my daughters, Julia, Emma, and Claire, and by Amy, my partner in pandemic as in all things.
Abbreviations

Poetry will be cited by appropriate numbers only (1–2); page numbers will be preceded by p. or pp. (pp. 1–2). For Wordsworth’s poetry, I have worked from the earliest print versions, but wherever possible I cite the various volumes of the Cornell Wordsworth, as indicated in each first relevant note. For Byron’s poetry, I have drawn on various volumes of Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980–93), which will be cited in each first relevant note. Editions for Coleridge, Hunt, Shelley, and Keats and other materials are listed here.

**Abbreviations**


**Reiman** Donald H. Reiman, ed., The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers. Lake xii
List of Abbreviations


SL

SPP

SWLH


Abbreviations as follows:

WLMY, 1: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years,

WLMY, 2: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years,
Part II: 1812–1820. Rev. Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill.

WLLY, 1: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years,

WLLY, 2: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years,

WLLY, 3: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years,

WLLY, 4: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years,