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Poetics of the Steel Plate Engraving: Letitia Landon and *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*

Isobel Armstrong

The central argument of this detailed reading of Landon's editorship of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* of 1832 turns on the technology of the (capitalist) steel plate and its composition through the accumulation of lines rather than through mimetic techniques. I suggest that Landon foregoes the mimetic contract in favour of a metonymic contract of juxtaposition deriving from her decision to prioritize the poetic line and the second-order poetics of stereotype and cliché (both terms of print technology). She employs a technique of adjacency and a continual play on the meaning of the line in order to set in motion a questioning of British assumptions about trade hegemony and the colonial imaginary that many of the poems invoke. I suggest that this is a genuinely new and original poetics.

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Challenges

When an image and a poem are put side by side, something happens. Juxtaposition changes both. Juxtaposition — an image and poem paired — was the principle of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*, which Letitia Landon began to edit in 1832, continuing until 1837. The album book genre to which the *Scrap Book* belongs was generally multiply authored. Landon's venture is highly unusual in being the work of a single author and in the choice of steel-engraved *landscapes* side by side with her poems, rather than the exotic female figures and society beauties associated with the feminized annuals.[1] She was explicit that her poems did not 'illustrate' these plates: instead the engravings were instigators of an associative process — literally a pre-text.[2] But she was self-consciously aware that the plates, technologized steel-engraved images for a mass-produced capitalist market, could become inadvertent commentaries on the poems.

The structural organization of the *Fisher's* volumes scarcely varied — a monochrome engraved steel plate reproduction of a pre-existing artwork, paired with a poem or text.[3] In 1832, the inaugural volume that I discuss here, there were (excluding prefatory material) thirty-five plates, each, except for one or two images, *illustrated* with a poem. My italics query illustration as a term, for it was precisely the relationship between text and plate that was questionable in Landon's context. For the same reason, the term 'ekphrastic' is problematic. Defined by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* as 'the literary and rhetorical trope of summoning up through words an impression of a visual stimulus, object, or scene [...] the subject shown before the eyes with visual vividness', the term takes for granted — 'shown before the eyes with visual vividness' — what is actually most debatable and conceptually complex about the relation of image and text. What exactly we are doing when we try to describe an image is a question that is beyond the remit of this article to answer, but I hope it will hover in the background. For the moment I am focusing on the aesthetics of steel plate technology, the cultural assumptions

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1 L.E.L, *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* (London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1832). For the context of literary album books, see Jonas Cope, 'Scrapped Sentiment: Letitia Landon and *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book*, 1832–1837', *Romanticism*, 25 (2019), 190–204; Katherine D. Harris, *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual, 1823–1835* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015); and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture, 1855–1875* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011).

2 In her 'Introduction' to the 1832 *Scrap Book* (following title page, unpaginated), Landon denigrates 'mere description'. She has 'endeavoured to give as much variety as possible, by the adoption of any legend, train of reflection, &c. which the subject could possibly suggest'. Landscape description would commit Landon to the masculine prospect poem where ownership of the eye dominated the text. Instead she chose to explore myth and legend, very similar to Tennyson's agenda in the 1830s.

3 The *Scrap Book* was also unusual in its comparative chastity of design and size. Twenty-eight by twenty-two centimetres, it was presented with a brown leather spine and a pale brown watered silk cover in the middle of which was stamped a golden lyre about an inch square.

underlying the album books in which they appeared, and Landon's response to the problematic double entity of plate and text.

I turn to the important prefatory material of the first *Scrap Book* of 1832 and subsequently address the relationship between poems and plates, but first I draw attention to Landon's terminology for the work of the poet. In the first paired poem, 'Pile of Fouldrey Castle, LANCASHIRE', she describes the poet as a 'minstrel' (p. 7). Notably, Landon does not associate herself with either the poetess or the improvisatrice (the latter a figure with which she was particularly associated) but with the 'minstrel', a professional musician whose singing and playing performs a social function at court or in a community — it is an insistence on the public sharing of affect. She must have seen that the category of the poetess was in danger of being reified, as readers extrapolated self-fulfilling gendered characteristics from the term.[4]

Prefatory material

The first issue of the *Scrap Book* was published in 1832, and sure enough, the prefatory material reminds readers of this context, though in a roundabout way. There are five separate items of prefatory material that cumulatively offer a way of thinking about poetry, community, and illustration. This, the first volume in the *Scrap Book* series, pulls off the considerable coup of having the Princess Victoria as vicarious patron of the annual as daughter of the Duchess of Kent, whose patronage is announced on the first page of the volume. Glamour and standing, royalist loyalty and national fealty are conferred on the annual by this single act. This first title page is followed by a second, the usual formal bibliographical and publishing details with a dedicatory poem under the title. This is a 'trite' poem which is actually difficult to parse. It purports to describe the gift book genre: Stanza 1: 'Gifts are the beads of Memory's rosary, | Whereon she reckons kind remembrances | Of friends and old affections.' Stanza 2: 'Christmas, you are welcome here; | Christmas comes but once a year. | Come — as in the good old time, | With gift, and song, and tale, and rhyme.' Gift annuals were of course Christmas market productions. The verses consolidate an overwhelmingly retrospective experience, a double reflexive act of memorializing — experience at second hand. The gift book is constituted by memory as a rosary of discrete acts ('beads') of recollection which are

[4] On the Landon 'problem' and the long-standing debate on the category of the poetess, see Sarah Anne Storti, 'Letitia Landon: Still a Problem', *Victorian Poetry*, 57 (2019), 533–56; and Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, 'Lyrical Studies', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27 (1999), 521–30. Susan Brown 'recognizes 'The Victorian Poetess' as 'deeply contested' ('The Victorian Poetess', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 180–202 (p. 199)). Tricia Lootens places Landon within a problematized category of 'the poetess' (*The Political Poetess: Victorian Femininity, Race, and the Legacy of Separate Spheres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 3).

then retold or 'reckoned' anew, brought into being through separate acts of recall by readers ('remembrances') as remembered 'old affections' and 'friends' return from the past. Christmas itself is a return to the past, 'the good old time', which is activated by 'gifts': the 'gifts' of memory's rosary are now constituted by 'song', 'tale', and 'rhyme'. These aesthetic forms commemorate the secondary experience of memory. The introductory poem signals Landon's intention to remain within the epistemology of the second order, to be a poet of the second order. This is her project throughout and, as I argue, enables her to work with the mass-producing capitalist steel plate which was the dominant form of annual illustration.

The scrapbook is a paradoxical entity. It is a model of readership that accepts both a prefabricated reality constructed from prior print materials and an independent creation by each reader as her own memories and associations become formative experiences — literally formative as the scrapbook maker physically orders materials.[5] Despite what we know of Landon's Whig politics, the 1832 *Scrap Book* does not offer a thematically or politically consistent succession of poems: from it the reader could electively configure either a liberal or conservative anthology.[6] The scrapbook, though assembled through privately organized memory, is not itself a private object. It is on display in a drawing room, open to public reading and inspection.

The third item of prefatory material is Landon's introduction. The prefatory poem conspicuously ignores pictorial art as a memory-generating genre. But at this point Landon attempts to describe the relationship of her poems to the plates and deliberately presents this as the 'minstrel' strategy of the second-order poet: 'It is not an easy thing to write illustrations to prints, selected rather for their pictorial excellence than their poetic capabilities; and mere description is certainly not the most popular species of composition' (unpaginated). She proposes a deliberately oblique strategy which is far from an attempt to redescribe the prints. It is an associative strategy, conjuring legend, trains of 'reflection', ideas suggested by the prints. This is a 'minstrel' strategy. It will put in circulation and remediate what is already known. The intention is to manufacture alternative narratives relating to cultural memory, not to regard the poem as mimesis of what is already a mimesis — they are to be untethered from mimetic prints. Though she says the prints will 'plead and win the cause by their own beauty' and, in a gesture

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[5] Important in this context is Ellen Gruber Garvey's work on the strange taxonomy of displacement created by a scrapbook and the personal sifting of pre-existing media that goes to construct it. She writes of the American context but much of her argument is relevant to *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*. See her *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[6] Lucasta Miller notes that one of Landon's earliest poems, 'Rome', was a 'threnody for republican liberty' (*L.E.L: The Lost Life and Mysterious Death of the 'Female Byron'* (London: Vintage, p. 63)). Landon's association with the Blessington set connected her with Byronic liberalism.

to democracy, that they derive from 'voluminous and expensive works [...] "sealed" to the many', it is clear that the poems are not subordinate to the prints and by the same token, neither are the prints subordinate to the poems. This is quite a revisionist feat, given that in most annuals prints and texts were, if not in a relation of subordination, interdependent. How Landon explores a relation to the prints is the substance of my discussion. But first the remaining prefatory matter is relevant.

A list of plates is followed by a free-standing poem to the then thirteen-year-old princess, 'The Princess Victoria', two 22-line paragraphs in rhyming couplets with a roughly — and rather roughly tripping — anapaestic rhythm, uniquely for this volume without an accompanying plate. Its lightweight stanzas set the fantasy of a fairy princess against the parliamentary reality she will meet as queen. A scintillating glass, crystal and bejewelled palace, the stock landscape of the Arabian Nights — date, palm, cedar, fountains, regal and erotic flowers, tulips, and roses — all the familiar tropes of legend and exoticized colonial space populate the elegant clichés of the first stanza.

As a queen the scenario is different. Dominated by male parliamentarians, 'That feminine fancy, a will of your own' will be impossible, the poem's second paragraph asserts. 'Eternal debate is the future for thee'. The male protagonists who will take over the young queen are named as Lord Brougham, Lord Grey, Daniel O'Connell, and Joseph Hume — the latter in his programme of retrenchment will censure even the sartorial choices of Victoria.

No Tories, such as Wellington, feature in this list. These figures are all radicals, all involved in the Reform Act and extension of the suffrage of 1832. They are figured as the disruptive advocates of radical change. But they also represent the flashpoints of Ireland and India, problematic colonial spaces. Masquerading as playfulness, Landon has brought together some of the most controversial elements of British national life — reform (Grey proposed the 1832 Reform Act), education (Brougham advocated reform through the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge), Ireland (O'Connell campaigned against the 1800 Act of Union), India (Hume made a fortune there before returning to advocate reform). It is a different masquerade from that of the first paragraph, but all of these elements reappear in the body of the *Scrap Book*. And the second paragraph implicitly asks where women belong in the new settlement of 1832. Its manipulation of affect for analytic purpose is typical of Landon's manner of proceeding. Effectively, the 1832 settlement is not a settlement at all in her reading, but the instigator of further disquiet.

The preceding title page, an innocuous list of thirty-five plates, is relevant here. The plates, male created, are listed, but not Landon's paired poems. More significantly, the plates represent the three domains — scenes from mainland Britain, Ireland, and India

— that match the unstable, questionable spaces intimated in 'The Princess Victoria'. Chosen from Fisher's own commercial publications and recycled in the *Scrap Book*, they represent spaces mostly at the extremities of the British Isles and certainly far from metropolitan centres, juxtaposed with depictions of the Indian continent. They are secondary in a number of ways, not least because the production of prints from pre-existing artworks was 'authored' not only by the primary painter or artist but by the engraver who dismantled the original in order to reproduce it as a commercial print. The engraver himself might be assisted by subordinates in the workshop to which he belonged. Thus the *Scrap Book*'s images were the work of over sixty different individuals at a conservative estimate.[7]

The commercial plate — lines

The steel plate, a secondary image, mediated a pre-existing design or picture. It was the newest reproductive technology for circulating black-and-white visual images — identifiable from their cool, silvery appearance — available to Landon's readers. Its hegemony lasted from the early decades of the nineteenth century to the mid-1840s, roughly the period when the annuals flourished. The hardness of a steel plate bearing intaglio designs, in contrast to copper, though much more difficult to work, could enable many more copies to be run off — up to 200,000 — before the plate showed signs of wear. The steel plate heralded mass commercial images in a capitalist market. Rather than emerging from traditional image-making processes such as copper etching or lithography, the line-engraved steel plate (though it had affinities with copper engraving), according to Basil Hunnisett, developed from the search for methods of achieving the multiple printing of banknotes in a form that would prevent forgery.[8] The Society of Arts reported on this process in 1819. Hunnisett writes that these engraving processes drew on industrial methods, from calico printing to button production in Birmingham (though he does not give details). The first definitive illustration of the steel plate was Charles P. Warren's 'Adam and Eve' for *Paradise Lost*.

The essence of steel line-engraving *is* the line. The barest outlines of the main design, miniaturized and geometrically squared and traced to the reduced dimensions of the plate, were limned on to the plate by etching, but the substance of the image was created by linear incisions of variable depth made by a graver or burin, a sharp pointed

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7 The main resource for exhibiting artists is Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, 8 vols (London: Graves and Bell, 1905–06). See also, Rodney K. Engen, *Dictionary of Victorian Engravers, Print Publishers and Their Works* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey; Teaneck: Somerset House, 1979). However, most of the artists and engravers can be found through a simple name search online and, since illustrated plates generated a market of separate prints for sale, images of their work still circulate today.

8 Basil Hunnisett, *Steel-Engraved Book Illustration in England*, Routledge Revivals (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 20.

needle (Hunnisett, pp. 50, 229). The deeper the incision the darker the area as the ink penetrated further and a corresponding creation of light and shade became possible. The similarity of steel engraving and copper etching ceases at this point: as T. H. Fielding writes in his *Art of Engraving* published in 1844, 'the manner of handling the needle is, however, very different, as in all the flat tints a ruler is made use of.'[9] Indeed, a ruling machine was employed whose operation he explained at length.[10] 'Every line may be the same depth, width, and distance from each other, without which it is entirely hopeless to obtain an even tint'; and 'clear blue skies are done by the ruling machine' (pp. 33, 32). The principle of the image creation is the accumulation of hundreds of closely laid lines that build up the image by discrete cuts that have no representational status in themselves but cumulatively create the final image. The Euclidean line, an entity with no breadth or depth and without diacritical status, organizes the image. Just as an image could be abstracted from component lines it could be resolved back into them and analysed back into non-meaning carrying marks. The original image had to be dismantled and recreated through lineation that could never be freed into the curvature of representational lines.[11] As if to challenge its own linearity the line-engraved plate would often portray the sea, that amorphous, non-linear element characterized by undulation. Virtuosic reflections are another common element, as if by creating a self-doubling entity the plate carried its reproducibility within itself. About ninety per cent of Landon's images portray the sea. Hunnisett reckons there were 400 line engravers working in the trade by 1822 and later in the century the number had increased by half to 600 (pp. 53, 64).

Fielding defended the line engraving against its parallel method, the mezzotint — 'it stands before all others' (p. 30). A mezzotint was easier to make because it could be created from incised dots made by a process of 'rocking' the plate with a toothed implement that indented the whole area of the plate.

How fundamental a departure this was into a new aesthetic can be seen by placing the new processes side by side with Ruskin's relational understanding of image-making. Ruskin's idol, Turner, took up commercial line engraving and mezzotint enthusiastically to disseminate his work. His 'Rivers of England', in coloured mezzotint,

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9 T. H. Fielding, *The Art of Engraving, with the Various Modes of Operation* (London: Nattali, 1844), p. 32.

10 'On a straight bar of steel is placed a socket, which slides backwards and forwards with a steady, but even motion. To the side of the socket is fitted a perpendicular tube, which receives a steel wire or any other hard substance, called a pen. This pen has a point like an etching needle, and is pressed down by the action of a spring [...]; and if the socket to which the pen is attached be drawn along the bar, it will form a straight line upon the plate, more even, but in other respects the same as if that line had been drawn by hand with a ruler. Now, if the plate or the ruler be moved, backwards or forwards, in a direction parallel to this first line, any number of lines may be drawn in the same manner' (p. 32).

11 The complexity of plate making was considerable. In addition to lineation, the plate had to go through a series of acid washing and rinsing.

was commissioned by William Bernard Cooke between 1822 and 1826. Ruskin himself used line engraving in *Modern Painters* (1843–60). But his understanding of artistic process contradicted the principles of line engraving. His language of lines was the relational language of mimesis. Representation, he thought, was fundamentally dependent on curved lines: 'a curve of any kind is more beautiful than a right line, [...] every curve divides itself infinitely by its changes of direction.'[12]

How did Landon respond to a commercial method of representation that produces a page 'covered with lines', non-signifying incisions that break the mimetic contract?

'Lines' are of course a synonym for poetry. Each of Landon's poems is matched to an engraved image, we have seen. But the poems do not 'match' or illustrate the illustrations: 'it is not an easy thing to write illustrations to prints.' It is immediately clear that the poems' formal, highly conventionalized stanzaic arrangements draw attention to themselves as conventional 'lines' on the page. They relate to the print simply as *print*, print matching the materiality of print, lines matching only lines. This edition of the *Scrap Book* is notable for its proliferation of formal pattern and its overdetermination of stanzas with multiple linear configurations. With some exceptions, few poems of the thirty-one that Landon wrote for this volume (two additional poems are authored by 'C', Thomas Crofton Croker), are alike in the combinations of stanza form, rhyme, and metre.[13] Clara Dawson has described how the album's reality faces inwards to the world of print and not outwards to representations of external phenomena.[14] If the Landon poem is the mimesis of anything it is the mimesis of print. The ruled lines of the engraving are not meaning-making in themselves. The many forms of Landon's stanzas seem to flaunt their standing as 'lines', marks arranged in patterns without representational status as diacritical signs.

Taking the first ten poems there is a huge variation of stanza form, where the poem as printed artefact comes into prominence. Landon rejoices in the sheer virtuoso handling of multiple verse forms. The heavy twelve-line paragraph of 'Carrick-a-Rede, Ireland'

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[12] *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols (London: Allen; New York: Longmans, Green, 1903–12), IV: *Modern Painters*, *Volume II* (1903), p. 88. Available online at <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/the-ruskin/the-complete-works-of-ruskin/> [accessed 13 November 2022].

[13] For Croker's considerable participation, see Letitia Elizabeth Landon, *Letters*, ed. by F. J. Sypher, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 67 (22 September 1831); pp. 80–81 (1832, date unspecified); pp. 95–96 (December 1833); p. 120 (8 August 1834); p. 144 (1 November 1836). As well as contributing to the text of the *Scrap Book*, Croker clearly gave Landon practical help: 'I have a deal to consult you with', she wrote on 8 August 1834. Croker was clearly nonplussed by Landon's way of dealing with illustrations and insisted in a long note to the letter of 22 September 1831 that she was 'rather slow' and had difficulty in 'writing up to' the *Fisher's* plates, though eventually her 'extraordinary fertility' won through (p. 67).

[14] Clara Dawson, 'Mechanical Reproduction, Commodity, and the Gift-Annual Aesthetic', *Studies in Romanticism*, 60 (2021), 247–75.

is followed by the three slighter four-line stanzas of ‘The Palace of the Seven Stories’, rhyming AABB but organized elaborately round an iambic tetrameter first line, a line of anapaests, followed by two dactylic lines. Landon follows ‘C’s’ mainly iambic eight-line stanzas with thirteen couplets in iambic tetrameter (‘The Deaf Schoolmaster’). ‘Storrs, Windermere Lake’ sets up a long eight-line stanza where dactylic tetrameters and trimeters alternate in a complex rhyme scheme —ABCBDEFE, where only the trimeters rhyme. This is followed by the twenty-six couplets of ‘The Pirate’s Song off the Tiger Island’ in trochaic tetrameters. The three ten-line stanzas of ‘The Upper Lake of Killarney’ make up individual lines with dactyls, iambs, and trochees, and another elaborate rhyme scheme follows the diverse patterns of the metre (ABABCCDEDE). ‘Hurdwar’ is a sonnet; ‘The Black-Rock Fort and Light-House’ is in conventional iambic tetrameter quatrains rhyming AABB. ‘The Taj-Mahal, at Agra’ is a thirteen-line blank verse poem, preceded by a four-line blank verse introduction.

Poetic lines

The virtuosity with ‘lines’ is not matched by the diction of her poems. Their tropes and vocabulary seem deliberately unoriginal. On first impression the stock language of well-used conventional poetic diction is their idiom. It is as if forfeiting the mimetic contract means for Landon the use of well-worn and reproducible language that can be manufactured as easily as copies can be duplicated from the steel plate. Indeed, the language we have come to use for this kind of writing — the stereotype, the cliché — is derived from print process itself. The stereotype was a technology for creating multiple copies from the same plate or forme.[15] It is this seeming triteness that Virginia Woolf was to repudiate.[16] Landon manipulates this language of cliché in inventive ways. But its undisguised, flagrant secondariness is what is important about it. There is no attempt to conceal it. I have spoken, for example, of the first poem to Victoria, with its conventional diction: ‘ivory throne’, windows of ‘crystals’, and the ‘rainbow showers’ of a fountain. Its ordinariness is as important as the paradoxical originality with which this trite language is manipulated. It is a sophisticated triteness that can be analytical as well as affect laden. As a brief example, to go back to the poem on Victoria, we find that the ‘rainbow showers’ of the fountain are actually created by the colours of the flowers surrounding it.

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[15] In Landon’s time stereotypes for duplication were made by manufacturing a plaster cast of the original or by ‘clichage’, where metal received an impression for casting. See Geoffrey Wakeman, *Victorian Book Illustration: The Technical Revolution* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973), p. 21.

[16] Virginia Woolf quoted from ‘Lines of Life’ (1829), in *Orlando* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) when Orlando sees this poem as a quintessential example of nineteenth-century sentimentality (p. 168).

The lack of correlation between print and poem is particularly evident in the Indian pairings, 'Hurdwar' and 'The Taj-Mahal, at Agra', for instance, where the consecrated European forms of sonnet and blank verse seem particularly ill-fitting with the colonial imaginary. And yet it is precisely through the disjunctions of juxtaposition that Landon's 'lines' come into meaning. It is a metonymic procedure, whereby the irritation or shock of disconnect in a sequence of poems creates a relationship of questioning or enquiry that is almost a nervous reaction, almost a non-verbal experience.[17] Or if not this surprise, juxtaposition assimilates and elides unlike experiences or locations by virtue of their adjacency, thus making both locations participate in the condition of the other.[18] I am using metonymy in the sense that it has come to mean in recent criticism — a chain of affinities and connections that brings unlike entities into relation. Josephine McDonagh writes of the metonymic relations established in Scott's writing when indigenous Scottish and Indian locations are elided.[19] Not the mimetic contract but the metonymic contract prevails. This way of eliciting meaning by conjunction is akin to the process of laying and inscribing adjacent lines that we find in steel plate manufacture. Metonymy is a technology of adjacency. And the 'lines' intimated by the metonymic contract extend beyond poetic 'lines' to other phenomena with a similar structure — lineage, the blood line, lines of communication, the shipping lines essential to colonial power. The plates themselves intimate the presence of lines from which they are made. Bowers's 'Carrick-a-Rede, Ireland' (facing p. 9) portrays the fragile reed bridge slung between the mainland Ireland and an island: a similar grass rope bridge is portrayed by Cox in the Indian province of Gurwall (facing p. 25). Allom's 'Carclaze Tin Mine' (facing p. 39) is cut with the primitive rail lines that transport ore, paralleled by lines of workers. The fishing line, symbol of property rights and game law, appears in country house landscapes.

What sort of contract does the second-order metonymic poet have with the reader, and vice versa? It is a relationship of questioning. First, Landon builds the issue of conjunction and correlation into the structure of her language. Secondly, questioning emerges structurally through juxtaposition of poems. I look briefly at the language of 'The Deaf Schoolmaster' here. In later sections I discuss the structure of the *Scrap Book*.

Illustrated by Henry Meyer, 'The Deaf Schoolmaster' is unusually a mezzotint created by the stipple process (*Fig. 1*). This enables more subtle contrastive tones of

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[17] See, for instance, the plate of Lake Killarney followed by the Indian Hurdwar (pp. 17, 18).

[18] See the Skeleton Group in the Rameswur and Furness Abbey (pp. 32, 33).

[19] Josephine McDonagh, *Literature in a Time of Migration: British Fiction and the Movement of People, 1815–1876* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 25–28. On the elision of India and Britain in the work of Scott, see pp. 58–60. I am indebted to McDonagh's thinking.

light and shade to appear on the steel plate than ruled engraving: a velvety black and halftones that can be gradated, patches of white where the plate has been scraped and no ink has touched endow the plate with expressive drama and affect. Though, as Geoffrey Wakeman points out, 'steel could not give the rich tones that were so highly prized in copper', steel mezzotint is distinctively different from ruled engraving in its contrastive function.[20] The extremes of black and white dramatize the difference between seeing and hearing, one sense foregrounding the disability of the other. The darkness of the ear trumpet, which cuts diagonally across the centre of the picture, points to the words on the page of the book that cannot be heard but only seen. It insists on the teacher's disability and the disjunction between sight and sound. The ear trumpet's technology of listening becomes a placeholder for the reader.

Fig. 1: 'The Deaf Schoolmaster', illustrated and engraved by Henry Meyer.

[20] Wakeman, p. 36. See also Gavin Bridson and Geoffrey Wakeman, *Printmaking and Picture Printing: A Bibliographical Guide to Artistic and Industrial Techniques in Britain 1750–1900* (Williamsburg: Bookpress, 1984).

The poem's octosyllabic couplets by an irony insist on the act of joining by rhyme's capacity to double, pair, and match, precisely what the deaf man can no longer do with sound and meaning. The deaf man's loss is precisely the loss of correlation, of the relation of sound and sense, the matching of sound with what he sees on the page, though even sight is weak — 'the eye is dim':

> He cannot hear the skylark sing,
> The music of the wild bee's wing;
> The murmur of the plaining bough;
> A gentle whisper fairy low;
> The noise of falling waters near — (p. 13)

Landon's opening lines, not quite fully alliterative, nevertheless sustain the repeated sounds 's', 'm', 'l', 'n', 'w', 'i', throughout the passage. These sounds come to us at the level of the phoneme, disarticulated from their content. One might say they are stippled into the verse, parallel to the creation of the non-signifying marks that engender the print. It is as if the poem responds to the primitive technology of the ear trumpet picking up consonants rather than vowels ('i' is the exception). Their recurrence is sensed rather than consciously registered. Landon's verse here points to two elements: first, an aesthetic of sensing, of threshold affect, of the intuition of unseen cognitive relations. Second, the corollary of this, a practice founded on the questioning of co-relation, of habitual connections and links, of unproblematic mediation. Once the mimetic contract is given up the metonymic relation foregrounds and questions juxtaposition.

I turn now to the prints sourced for this number of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* and their structural questioning by means of juxtaposition.

Commercial prints and secondary images

At several removes from its originals, the volume of 1832 is a true scrapbook in that its contents are created from pre-existing print media and restructured in accordance with Landon's preferences. Her images were sourced from costly *Fisher's* guidebooks that exerted a monopoly on the scrapbook. The vast majority of landscape plates dominate the first volume of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* but they are occasionally relieved by 'Whig' images that recall the reforming figures in 'The Princess Victoria'. One is the Right Hon. John Philpot Curran, campaigner for Catholic emancipation and against the Union of Ireland with England (1800), later associate of William Godwin. Another subversive thinker is William Roscoe: son of a market gardener and public house owner, a Unitarian, he rose to become a polemicist against the slave trade (*The Wrongs of Africa*, 1787–88) and historian of Lorenzo de' Medici.

Landon speaks of bringing expensive illustration to the 'many'. It does seem, from the consistency of purpose apparent in the choice of prints, that Landon selected the images herself from the only four *Fisher's* publications to which she was given access. The publications were probably dictated to her but not the choice of images from them. The Indian and oriental plates are taken from Volume 1 of the massive (17 × 12 inch) *Views in the East Comprising India, Canton, and the Shores of the Red Sea with Historical and Descriptive Illustrations*, by Captain Robert Elliot. The publication date is given as 1833, so Landon clearly had access to the publication in progress. The exception is 'Skeleton Group in the Rameswar, Caves of Ellora', which comes from Volume 2, perhaps originally placed in the first volume. All the Irish plates come from *Ireland Illustrated, in a Series of Views*, by G. N. Wright, illustrated by G. Petrie and W. H. Bartlett (1831). *Fisher's Views of Devonshire and Cornwall* (1832), illustrated by Thomas Allom and W. H. Bartlett, furnish most of the landscapes from Cornwall and Devon. *Lancashire Illustrated from Original Drawings*, by S. Austin, J. Harwood, and R. & C. Pyre, also published in 1832, supplied the Lancashire plates. (I have not been able to trace the first illustration in the *Scrap Book*, of Fouldrey Castle.)

Fisher's topographical guides, recycled for Landon's album, were clearly exploiting a market. It was a market attempting to understand and participate in the colonial imaginary conjured by Ireland and India, and educating itself by mapping the limits of nation and the nation's commercial and civic life beyond the metropolitan centre of London. *Fisher's* was servicing curiosity, and to some extent this trade belongs to the Brougham didactic project laughingly called up in 'The Princess Victoria'. But when one looks at Landon's selections of plates it is striking how powerfully they contradict the ideological projects and intentions of these topographical guides. Landon's agenda does not include the metropolitan street scenes, commercial buildings, banks, factories, railways, town and country houses, middle-class dwellings, and aristocratic seats on display in these volumes whether in Ireland, Cornwall, or Lancashire. *Lancashire Illustrated* quotes Cowper's anti-slavery poem, 'Charity' (1782) on its frontispiece — 'Art thrives most | Where commerce has enrich'd the busy coast'. The message calls up a new liberal settlement deriving from the economics of Adam Smith, where art and commerce interact, and where middle and aristocratic classes work side by side to one another's mutual benefit in trade and industry, fostering economic growth in benign collaboration.[21] The prints are commercial in two

[21] Landon's view was precisely that a society founded on commerce and economic exchange fostered weariness and selfishness: these words recur in her 'On the Ancient and Modern Influence of Poetry' in the *New Monthly Magazine* (November 1832), reprinted in *Letitia Elizabeth Landon: Selected Writings*, ed. by Jerome McGann and Daniel Reiss (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1997), pp. 160–69. Poetry 'civilises because it refines' in a kind of reflexive action: 'The influence of poetry has two eras, — first as it tends to civilise; secondly as it tends to prevent that very civilisation from growing too cold and too selfish' (p. 165). The argument of this article is that society needs the education of the feelings in order to counteract the selfishness driven by economic gain — 'principles either of vanity or lucre' (p. 168). Educated feeling is a public not a private good.

senses: organized for mass consumption and furthering the ideology of exponential trade and commercial exchange. A similar process is at work in Captain Elliot's *Views in the East*, where India, in particular, is seen with respect as an ancient civilization worthy of scholarly study and as a source of commercial exploitation. India, of course, was not under British rule, though wealth had been extracted from it throughout the past centuries.[22] The images are mediated for a new post-1832 settlement in civil society.

Landon's choice of prints deliberately excludes these elements. Her selection locates the geographical extremities and periphery of the British Isles, the coasts of Ireland, Lancashire, and Cornwall, and the vast ruins of the Indian continent. There is no metropolitan reference. The buildings are for the most part colonial ruins and in the British Isles ancient castles now voided of contemporary aristocratic tenure — or if not, that tenure is occluded. The Giant's Causeway, Polruan Castle, the Black-Rock Fort and Lighthouse, Liverpool, the ruins of Hurdwar or the Taj Mahal, locations that summon up either ancient history or perilous, exposed, and insecure environments or both at once, are the dominant images. Landon has remediated prints already recycled from originals in *Fisher's* tourist manuals. In the *Fisher's* prints, landscapes, when not urban landscapes, tend to call up the aura of the prospect, the aura of ownership — slight figures in the foreground that take the eye inward and beyond to a receding pastoral landscape that merges with the distant horizon in an imitation of the ambience of the traditional landscapes of high art, quintessentially Claude Lorrain. Even the Indian landscapes are composed on the principles of the pastoral prospect landscape, a visual field imposed on the structure of the exotic terrain. One could say that the black-and-white steel engraving manufactures aura. Walter Benjamin's sense that mass production subtracts the aura of high art from an original is a paradigm that does not quite work here: every steel plate copy mass-produces and imitates the affect of high art.[23] In Benjamin's terms this is inauthentic but the steel plate insistently references and disseminates the model of aura. Landon relocates these images yet again, by giving them a new context at the edges of the nation and divesting them of ownership. They are only owned by their readers. Her deliberate refusal to 'illustrate' the plates directly makes for an oblique relationship between plate and poem. Sometimes an element in the poem will call out a feature of the illustration that would not be foregrounded but for the configuration of the poem with the image. Rather than poem illustrating the images, aspects of the image become an unintended commentary on the text.

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[22] See David Gilmour, *The British in India: Three Centuries of Ambition and Experience* (London: Penguin, 2018); and William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[23] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (New York: Schocken, 1963), pp. 217–51.

The structure of *Fisher's Scrap Book*

For Landon the printed image precipitates a parallel world of thought and imagination, not a corresponding one trapped in redescribing. Nevertheless, the sequence of images is carefully ordered and the relations between them are deliberately judged. Juxtaposition newly contextualizes the images from the four source books from which she worked. Her method was to alternate English scenes with Irish and Indian engravings. Irish and Indian scenes sometimes fall together but no two such scenes appear side by side. They are always separated before and after by indigenous landscapes or other images. It is clear that Landon saw Irish and Indian scenes through the lens of a colonial imaginary. Sometimes the effect of these juxtapositions is contrastive, but more often the effect of the collocation is to grant both images a metonymic proximity that elides them. The condition of England is inextricably the condition of the colonial space, and vice versa. The two spaces become part of a continuum and belong together in a way that cancels the far and the near. Both spaces are at once made strange and granted the closeness of familiarity. As an example, see the sequence 'Fowey Harbour and Polruan Castle', 'Skeleton Group in the Rameswur, Caves of Ellora', 'Furness Abbey', 'Benares', 'The African', and 'Curraghmore'. This volume of *Fisher's* is saturated in colonial thinking. But it pervades both spaces and they share alike the stresses and strains of colonial poetics. Repeatedly, Landon exposes the colonial will to hegemony by deflecting it into myth, legend, and reverie which itself is not free from the imperial imagination. Her method of juxtaposition, however, creates not critique but the jolt of unease when both images, both poems, either share the strain of a false position or disconnect in unexpected contradiction. That is why I have called this a nervous as much as an intellectual experience of surprise.

Her belief in the bonding power of the public circulation of affect that pervades these poems, though it does not prevent her from using it against itself, leads her into some compromising positions when ideological difficulties are occluded. It is clear that she was an enemy of the slave trade and of slavery, and an enemy of the extortion of capital from colonial territory through unscrupulous and exploitative trade. Her sympathies with opposition to the Act of Union between England and Ireland of 1800 are also clear. But her strategy of indirection can soften conflict and mute complexity. She frequently produces a poetry that at once exposes and colludes with colonial power. The obligations of the scrapbook formula — the making of a portfolio of discrepant and sometimes incongruent materials — meant that she could include poems that represented different and contradictory positions inflecting a range of contemporary political beliefs. A reader could selectively choose and construct politically conservative and liberal positions from the portfolio of materials of this volume. Having said this,

the questioning of colonial values emerges from her praxis of collocation that is cumulatively significant.

Two poems, 'The African' (pp. 35–36) and 'Benares' (p. 34), collude with the colonial imaginary. 'The African' is illustrated by, or illustrates, one of the few mezzotints in the volume. It portrays the intensity of Negro black against the European whiteness of a female figure Landon designates a seraphim — mezzotints guaranteed a much more intense contrast than engraved steel. The African is a victim of the slave trade. Beginning with an allusion to 'The Ancient Mariner' — its first verse in the same metre: 'It was a king in Africa, | He had an only son' (compare 'It was an Ancient Mariner | And he stoppeth one in three') — and gesturing to Coleridge's poem as a slave trade narrative, it refers possibly to the slave ship Zong (suitably muted), the incident of 1781 that was to inspire Turner, in which 133 slaves were thrown overboard:

> Now shame upon the cruel wind,
>   And on the cruel sea,
> That did not with some mighty storm,
>   Set those poor captives free:
>
> Or, shame to those weak thoughts, so fain
>   To have their wilful way. (pp. 35–36)

But the shame of the slave trade is exonerated by the African's privilege of becoming Christian. The blue-eyed seraph, perhaps appropriated from Coleridge's 'seraph-band', converts him through love:

> She taught him from this weary earth
>   To look in faith above.
>
> She told him how the saviour died
>   For man upon the tree. (p. 36)

She is a mediating angel, next to God among the orders of beings round the deity.[24] Coleridge's existential guilt disappears from view.

'Benares', placed prior to 'The African', excoriates the Hindu religion: 'City of idol temples, and of shrines, | Where folly kneels to falsehood' (p. 34). Summoning

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[24] Landon's position in this poem is different from that in her essay on poetry in the *New Monthly Magazine*, where she follows the Hegelian ideology that Africans belong to an irredeemably slave culture — 'slaves from the earliest period' (*Selected Writings*, ed. by McGann and Reiss, p. 162). The African belongs to a dignified hunting society until he is degraded by the slave trade.

echoes of Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1733), the poem speaks of debasement: ‘Yet man, this glorious creature, can debase | His spirit down, to worship wood and stone’. Hegemonic Christianity is reasserted in the large prose commentary. Liberally quoting Bishop Heber’s fulminations against the narrow streets — not ‘wide enough to admit a wheel carriage’, the presence of sacred bulls, thieving monkeys, the idols of fakirs’ houses and their ‘discordant instruments’, the hideous deformity of mendicants, the gaudy colours and religious images embedded in the houses — Heber’s repugnance is visceral (p. 34).

These irredeemable commentaries, standing on their own, clearly consolidate ideological positions that are racist and profoundly Eurocentric. Landon *does* grant them this space. The optionality of these positions, however, created by the strategy of constant juxtaposition, and the prevailing aesthetic of personalized scrapbook composition, in which the agency and choice of the scrapbook compiler is respected, does allow the reader her own decisions. This underlying assumption means that the sequence of poems and images can be read through relationships rather than through discrete positions. This is not to exonerate these texts. But Landon does grant alternative ways of reading them. ‘Benares’ and ‘The African’ belong to a three-part sequence of poems on religious experience, beginning with ‘Furness Abbey’ (p. 33). This poem is Anglocentric. It is a lament for the asceticism of an earlier and repressive phase of early Christian culture. The speaker — so often Landon’s poems are dramatic monologues — consolidates each of its four stanzas with a refrain:

> I think of the days we are living now,
> And I sigh for those of the veil and the vow.
>
> I would be content alone to dwell
> Where the ivy shut out the sun from my cell,
> With the death’s-head at my side, and the missal on my knee. (p. 33)

No reference is made to the plate of Furness Abbey, romanticized by Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (1850) and itself a ruin (selected from *Lancashire Illustrated*, a Cistercian abbey built in the twelfth century and destroyed in the sixteenth). Drawn by the Dundee artist Henry Harwood and engraved by William Tombleson, Harwood’s recessing landscape of empty arches, voided spaces moving ever deeper into the stone ruins, shows ivy open to the sky and four desolate courtyards that were once rooms. It becomes an involuntary commentary, ‘illustrating’ the poem rather than being illustrated by it, on the fanaticism and denials of the Christian belief and practice exemplified in the poem, a hollowed-out culture of Christian asceticism. Juxtaposed with the plate from ‘Benares’ (*Fig.* 2), its elegiac ruins contrast with the peaceful, ancient towers and minarets overlooking

the Ganges and its active river life. Its asceticism exposes the energy of the aesthetic in Hindu worship and the power of art: the 'gaudy colours' of the houses, the 'beautiful and elaborate carvings of flowers, animals, and palm branches, equalling in minuteness and richness', Heber says in mitigation of his contempt, 'the best specimens I have seen in Gothic or Grecian architecture' (p. 34). This in turn exposes the blanched anaemia of the seraph's quietism in 'The African'. Though Hindus are accused of the 'worship [of] wood and stone', the poems flanking 'Benares' manifest a parallel worship of sacred wood: 'my crown of the thorn' ('Furness Abbey') or the wood of the Christian cross: 'She told him how the Saviour died | For man upon the tree' ('The African') (pp. 33, 36). The power of the symbolic demands a reciprocal recognition of Indian images or else a reciprocal condemnation of them. The strategic inconsistencies of the *Scrap Book*, working through almost subliminal hints and reference, do enable the reader to experience that perception of unease and contradiction that pervades this volume. India, at that point not under British rule, but a patchwork of kingdoms and financial fiefdoms, was often accorded a careful respect among the British. These poems invite us to see them as dramatic monologues, not subjective lyrics. The continual perception of the glitch of contradiction, the threshold awareness of the problematic, is, however, persistent. And combined with the ambiguities of the images, it amounts to a systematic procedure. This might be one of the aspects of what David Russell calls 'tact', the indirection that prompts revaluation, rather than the adoption of monologic positions.[25]

Fig. 2: 'Benares', sketched by Capt. R. Elliot, drawn by W. Purser, engraved by W. Cooke.

[25] David Russell, *Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), in particular, pp. 1–11.

Two poems

I end with two poems that do establish, paradoxically through the very technique of equivocation, two unequivocal positions. These are ‘Curraghmore’ (pp. 37–38) and ‘The Pirate’s Song off the Tiger Island’ (pp. 15–16). ‘Curraghmore’ resists the guidebook’s triumphalist narrative of Protestant hegemony and English rule. ‘Tiger Island’ refuses the narrative of colonial trade. One relates to the ‘lines’ of British Protestant descent, the other to the ‘lines’ of connection and disconnection in colonial trade.

Ireland Illustrated’s sycophantic prose adopts the language of the sublime as its idiom, the dialect of the eighteenth-century prospect poem that established the ownership of the eye. The ‘sylvan scenery’ is throughout seen from the vantage point of the mansion to which it belongs.[26] We see from the ‘residence of the noble proprietor’ the ‘sinuosities of a stream that falls through a dark and thickly-wooded glen’ and beyond it a ‘spacious plain’. ‘The size and grandeur of the house are in proportion to the noble demesne’ (p. 41). The ploys of the Gothic sublime are at pains to establish the hegemony of family and British possession, praising the British family tomb, and discoursing on the genealogical pedigree that enabled the Beresford family, in the early seventeenth century, to inherit the estate. Consolidating English possession, the mansion’s picture gallery contains Willem van der Hagen’s painting celebrating the victory of Protestant dominance in Ireland in 1690, *Landing of King William of Glorious Memory at Carrickfergus, 1690*, painted in 1728.

Contemporary with this account and with Landon’s *Scrap Book*, adjacent to County Waterford, in County Wexford, the persistent agrarian violence of the ‘tithe war’ of the 1830s was being played out: the enforced payment of tithes by Catholics to maintain Protestant institutions led to reciprocal killings in 1831. In 1832 a crowd of 200,000 gathered in protest.[27] The serene scene created by W. B. Bartlett and engraved by R. Brandard (both distinguished as draughtsman and engraver — Brandard had engraved for Turner) constructs a landscape in stasis whose peace is intense in proportion to the incipient unease of its context (*Fig. 3*).

Landon’s poem simply charts the seemingly innocuous passage of the seasons. Naturalizing the movement of organic life, Landon’s ‘lines’ appear to fix the predictable cyclical structure of the seasons. But though the metrical patterns are regular in each eight-line stanza — four trochaic trimeters, a fifth trochaic tetrameter followed by three trimeters, but this time alternating iambs and a trochee — the rhyme scheme is wildly

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[26] G. N. Wright, *Ireland Illustrated in a Series of Views* (London: Fisher, 1831), p. 41.

[27] See Gary Owens, ‘The Carrickshock Incident, 1831: Social Memory and an Irish *Cause Célèbre*’, *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), 36–64; and *Riotous Assemblies: Rebels, Riots & Revolts in Ireland*, ed. by William Sheehan and Maura Cronin (Cork: Mercier Press, 2011).

different in each stanza. Within the predictability of the pattern there are considerable unpredictable variations — ABCBEFAF, ABCBAEFE, ABCBDEFE, ABCBCDED, ABABCDAD, ABCBDEFE, ABCB — encouraging that nervous almost subliminal sense of making strange I mentioned earlier.

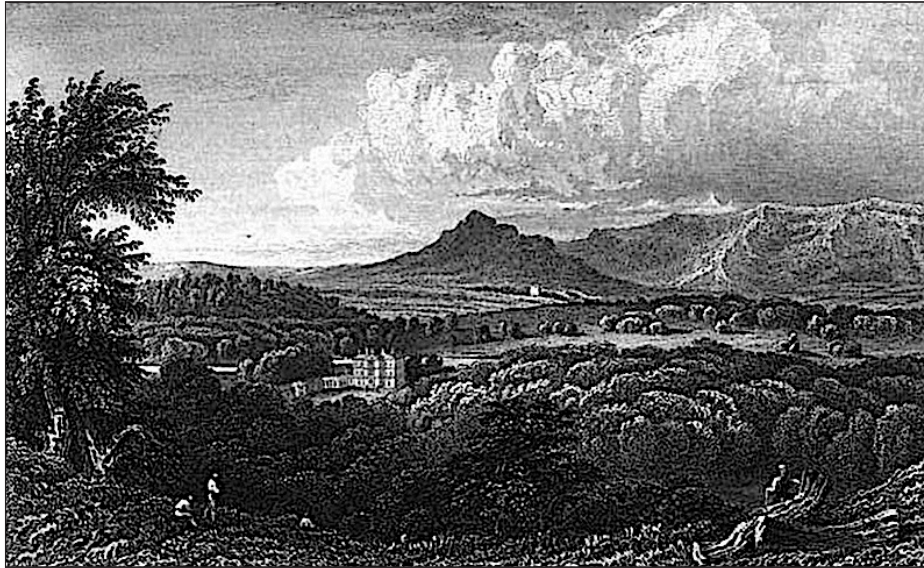

Fig. 3: 'Curraghmore', drawn by W. H. Bartlett, engraved by Robert Brandard.

Landon's sophisticated banality builds the poem round two colours, green and red, which recur throughout the poem. Colour, that element that makes the world interpretable and differentiated, gradually acquires political valence. The red rose of summer and its green leafage are established in the first stanza. Autumn's colours are modifications:

> The grapes are dyed with purple,
> The leaves are tinged with red,
> And the green and golden plumage
> Of the pheasant's wing is spread. (p. 37, Stanza 3)

Winter sees further variation. The putative reader is exhorted, 'Broach ye the crimson Malvoisie' and pine and holly sustain the recurrence of green (Stanza 4). In the sixth and final eight-line stanza, after the celebration of violets in the fourth, we return to 'green and tender verdure' and the rose's 'break of crimson promise' (p. 38). Redness belongs to the highly cultivated and artificially refined products of aristocratic consumption — a rose, grapes, wine. Green, on the other hand, recurs in the natural world and, in the pheasant's case, belongs to the bird designated for slaughter at aristocratic hands, its

red blood a recurrent aspect of aristocratic shooting sport. The green associated with indigenous Ireland, the 'natural' recurrent organic order of things, is subtly shown to have biological and thus historical priority over the artifice of redness. The green of St Patrick's Day was adopted in 1798 after the Irish rebellion.[28] It superseded blue, represented in the fifth stanza — a heavenly blue catching its colour 'from gazing on the skies'; a universal colour implicitly unattainable except in the rare moments of spring.

The faint existential shudder of these lines, when we think of the settled calm certainty of the print to which they are 'matched' and the colonial rhetoric of power, ownership, and Irish subjugation from which the print derives, is an undermining experience, where incipient questions are suspended in the printed words. This is not a dialogic poem or a politically inflected argument. It uses colour to challenge the fixed, monochrome associations of the steel engraving. The symbolic meanings of colour are present but barely available, almost subliminal. But it is not an equivocal poem either. It shows the elements of red and green, aristocratic and indigenous growths, uneasily coexisting by devices of juxtaposition. It is a technique of metonymic discomfort. The poem uses the language and affect of pastoral to raise questions of interpretation and agency. The print portrays a number of figures in its foreground, four male figures seemingly contemplating from above the mansion and its extensive 'demesne'. Who are they? And what are they doing? Are they proprietors, tourists, labourers, servants, poachers? The ownership of the eye is and is not available to them, as the prospect appears behind a barrier of shrubs. Despite the calm of the print the poem reveals or perhaps creates its precariousness. And the plate becomes an inadvertent comment on the poem.

The violent aggression of 'Tiger Island' is partly a moral shock. The pirates thieve from a 'legitimate' trading ship what, the poem makes clear, was already 'spoil', thieved from multiple countries of origin in the East. The plunder is therefore doubled. The 'legitimate' merchant ship has done their work for them, the pirates say — 'Our first health shall be to him' (p. 16). The waves of Clarkson Stanfield's rough seas, where the engraver has had to use an array of incisions and cuts to arrive at the originals (Stanfield's rendering of waves was once praised by Ruskin for its fidelity), ensure that technique impinges on the poem (*Fig. 4*).[29] The near disintegration of representation that storm water imposes on this plate is overdetermined here. It is as if the breaking storm waves forcing the breaking of the mimetic contract have put pictoriality in crisis, the liaison between conventions and actuality at severing point. But they have also broken down 'lines' of connection. Landon does not refer to Stanfield's pictorial image, but she

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[28] See Helen Litton, *Irish Rebellions 1798–1921* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2018); and *The United Irishmen, Rebellion and the Act of Union 1798–1803*, ed. by John Gibney (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2018).

[29] *Works of Ruskin*, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, III: *Modern Painters, Volume I* (1903), pp. 534–35.

does exploit the breaking point of relationships to arrive at a fundamental critique of commercial exploitation of colonial territories, which is also a violent breaking of the social contract.

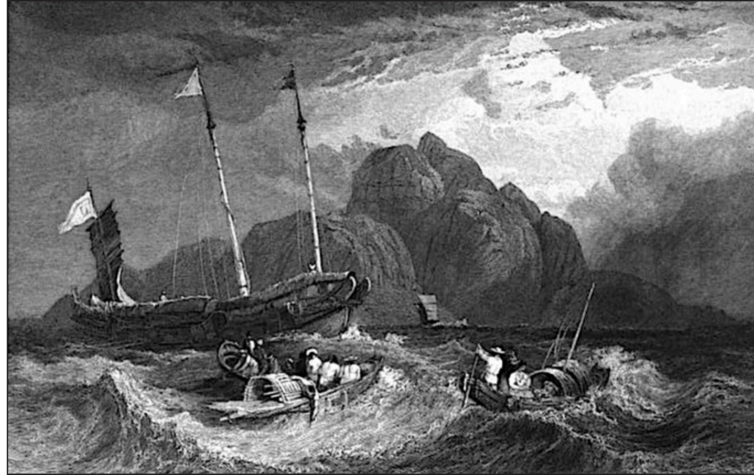

Fig. 4: 'Tiger Island', sketched by Capt. R. Elliot, drawn by C. Southall, engraved by Robert Goodall. From a painting by Clarkson Stanfield.

Stanfield's image is of high seas round Tiger Island, at the entrance of the River Tigris. Captain Robert Elliot's *Views in the East* comments on the Stanfield plate entirely in terms of imperial hegemony, commercial exploitation, and the use of force to subdue hostile subjects:

> In the first effort of the English to establish a commercial intercourse with the Chinese at Canton [opium?], the entrance of the river was forced by the ships [...]. It is fresh in our recollections, that the same method was adopted to bring the Chinese to reasonable terms of civility and respect, at the time that the last embassy was sent from England.[30]

Landon's poem begins with the hubristic savagery of the pirates and the storm whose violence they claim they rival and is remarkable for its taxonomy of plundered items. First raw materials, which include flesh, the erotic promise of female slaves from the Orient — 'Maidens, in whose orient eyes' — seen on exactly the same level as pearls from Oman, diamonds from Golconda, and dinars or currency (p. 15). The plundered nations include the key areas of colonial exploitation — Arab states, India,

[30] Captain Robert Elliot, R. N., *Views in the East Comprising India, Canton, and the Shores of the Red Sea*, 2 vols (London: Fisher, 1833), II, unpaginated.

the Philippines, China. Manufactured objects follow: crimson silk, gold chains. And here Landon conflates gold chains with golden hair and introduces the mirror that reflects it, commodity reflecting itself as the reduplicated image of gold (and possibly of a prostitute's hair). Commodity penetrates to images. It is a short transition to the next item in the taxonomy of plunder: those things that are virtually dematerialized as essences — perfume, spices — and distilled as the equivalent of spirit and soul, a misrecognition of commodity that smuggles it not only into the sensuous life but into the life of mind itself:

> All those crystal flasks enclose
> Sighs of the imprisoned rose;
> And those porcelain urns are filled
> By sweet Indian wood distilled. (p. 16)

The transfiguration of a rose from scent to 'sigh', from palpable sensuous presence to affective expiration, suggests how commodity penetrates the body *and* consciousness. Landon saw the need to retreat to an internal subjective life as dialectically related to the ravages of a commercial and capitalist society eroding social bonds.

Conclusion

Landon's work might be seen through the thinking of Friedrich Kittler as an early example of his reading of technologized media. He instanced the gramophone, film, and the typewriter as standardized and standardizing agents of the machine in modernity that deprive the human subject of autonomy. But the technologized steel plate could be seen as a forerunner of this machine-made media, dictating forms of experience, a circuit in which media operate on people as much as people operate on media. Landon's seeming acceptance of the conventions of the steel plate, assenting to a 'technological' verse and conventions determined by the demands of mass reproduction and circulation, might align her with the communicative revolution assumed by Kittler in which the agency of 'so-called man' is under erasure.[31] She could be read as the muse of a capitalist system of print culture and dissemination. In 'Lines of Life', the poem so much disliked by Virginia Woolf, and which has to a great extent determined how her poetry is read, she wrote of the way her life was predetermined by social and economic forces she could not control. These are lines of life, not lines from life: the 'lines' she is imagining are predetermining constraints, metaphorically derived from

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[31] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. xxxiii.

the lifelines on the palm of the hand that in popular fortune telling determine one's fate and relate once again to the lines of the steel plate. But it is too easy to assume that these wholly predetermined the 'lines' of her poetry. She turned the constraints of line technology to her advantage by creating metonymic juxtapositions out of the failure of the mimetic contract. Her sophisticated and determined adoption of a poetry of the second order not only enabled the wide circulation of her works in print media — cliché and stereotype were originally printers' terms, we have seen — but enabled her to explore and mediate the familiar, the already known, and remake it. She made the secondary work in interrogative ways. The minstrel's prerogative is to work with and circulate narratives that arouse communal feeling, communal thinking. Her *oeuvre* was uneven, and it would be unrealistic to claim otherwise. However, *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* provided a workshop in which she explored and developed her aesthetic and her writing. There she explored the bad faith of her culture, which meant exploring her own. She offered her readers a way in to both, and sometimes a way out through the figure of the minstrel who circulated sharable narratives. Whatever its constraints and limitations, the first volume of the *Scrap Book* is a major achievement.