

William Wordsworth

*Concerning the
Convention of Cintra*

A Bicentennial Critical Edition
Richard Gravil and W. J. B. Owen

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Convention of Cintra*
A Critical Edition

edited by Richard Gravil
and W. J. B. Owen

with a Critical Symposium by
Simon Bainbridge, David Bromwich
Timothy Michael and Patrick Vincent

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Preface

The reason for this critical edition of *Concerning the Convention of Cintra*, Wordsworth's most ambitious prose work, is not far to seek: 2008 saw the bicentennial of the Convention itself, and 2009 sees the bicentennial of Wordsworth's belated tract upon that event—a tract which expresses with extraordinary passion the anger of many at such an egregious instance of a victorious army of liberation treating its defeated and imperial opponent to the spoils of victory, and, more generally, the fury of a generation at the imperial use made by Napoleon of France's erstwhile patriotic armies.

The text for this edition is extracted from Volume 1 of the electronic version (2008) of *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (1974), as edited by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser. Professor Owen's general and textual introductions, textual notes, appendices, and his commentary, still invaluable at this date, are retained in full (Professors Owen and Smyser divided the prose works between them, and the Cintra editing was solely his). The benefits of electronic processing will appear mainly in the following respects. First, the entire text is searchable. Second, the presence of editorial commentary is indicated by the symbol ¶ in the margin, or by the line number being in that colour, and the appropriate page of commentary can be accessed from the text via a hyperlinked button ► in the margin. Third, the table of contents is itself hyperlinked, and is duplicated in the form of hyperlinked bookmarks at the left of the screen, enabling instant navigation between the general introduction, the textual introduction, Wordsworth's text and appendices (themselves hyperlinked to and from the appropriate page of text), the editorial appendices, and the commentary. Fourth, the use of colour, and the separate lineation of columnized textual notes is designed to make these features of the editorial apparatus clearer and easier to construe than in the first edition.

It is hoped that this digital edition will enable scholars, critics and students to access the work in affordable form, so as to reach an informed judgement—whatever that judgment may be—on the curious critical controversies that recur from time to time as to the nature of its politics. And to stimulate the search for such judgement,

the volume includes a critical symposium made up of a Foreword by the present editor, two short contributions, by Simon Bainbridge and David Bromwich to a debate at the 2008 Wordsworth Summer Conference on the place of the *Cintra* in Wordsworth's life and work, and two longer papers, by Timothy Michael and Patrick Vincent presented at the same conference. In the Critical Symposium, references to the text are cited by line number (that is, the line numbers in this electronic text) and by page references to the Clarendon edition of the *Prose Works* [Clarendon].

I am grateful, for varieties of help with the production of this text, to John Beer, Jeff Cowton, Michael John Kooy, Sam Ward, and Averill Buchanan, and of course to Betty and Lynette Owen, representing the estate of W. J. B. Owen, for their agreement to its production.

Richard Gravil, Tirril, 2009

A Critical Symposium

introduced and edited by Richard Gravil

A NOTE ON REFERENCES

In the essays that follow, the line numbers are those of this electronic edition, and page references are to the Clarendon edition cited as [Clarendon].

Foreword: Richard Gravil

Wordsworth as Partisan

OF Wordsworth's many ways of characterising Napoleon, the aptest is perhaps 'the intoxicated setter-up of Kings': by 1808, Michael Glover points out in *Britannia Sickens*, the Corsican was Emperor of France, King of Italy, Mediator of the Swiss Republic, and 'Protector' of the Rhine; one of his brothers was King of Holland, another of Naples, a third of Westphalia; Spain, Dalmatia and the Hanseatic states were his clients; and after defeating Austria, Prussia and Russia he had concluded a treaty with the Tsar, dividing Europe between them.¹ The major obstacle to perfection of the 'continental system', whereby France attempted to end British trade with Europe and control internal trade to the benefit of Paris as the hub of Empire, was the efficacy of Britain's naval blockade of such external trade as remained. A minor flaw was the refusal of Portugal to join the system. To punish Portugal, Napoleon therefore decided to dismember it into three principalities—one for the General entrusted with invading this small and relatively enlightened state; one to be kept under permanent military occupation; and one to reward the Spanish Prime Minister, Manuel Godoy, for his compliance. A further inducement to this policy was the possibility that annexing Portugal's naval fleet would help Napoleon achieve his goal of maritime supremacy.

While sensible enough, by mercenary standards, the invasion was only half-hearted in execution. Inadvertently, Napoleon started a train of events that led (though not quite inexorably) to Waterloo. Britain had, hitherto, found no viable employment on the continent for its small army of 60,000 regular troops. Now it was impelled to act, by the imminent threat to its naval security, and gifted with a winnable land campaign. Napoleon, Michael Glover says, 'solved the British problem for them'.² He not only entrusted the annexation of Portugal to a small, probably beatable force of about

1 *Britannia Sickens: Sir Arthur Wellesley and the Convention of Cintra* (London, Leo Cooper, 1970) 16–18.

2 *The Peninsular War, 1807–1814* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974), 26

30,000 troops, but his treachery to Spain—sending 75,000 troops to occupy all of the fortresses on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees, including Barcelona, on the pretext of reinforcing his supplying his Portuguese forces—turned Spain from ally into a ferocious enemy. By March 1808 the Imperial army had occupied Madrid, and the effect upon Spain can be seen from Wordsworth's copious quotations from the proclamations of various provincial Juntas that sprang into existence to avenge such treachery. For the next six years, Napoleon's overwhelming numerical superiority in the Peninsula was nullified by the need to police Spain's regular and guerrilla forces. These, however inept (and for the most part they were tragically inept) proved inexhaustible.

By a series of accidents, some of which are made clear in Wordsworth's tract and some in W. J. B. Owen's general introduction, the first major engagement of British troops in the Peninsular War was led not by the general nominally in charge, Sir Hew Dalrymple, but by a younger lieutenant-general, Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had gained something of a reputation in India for decisiveness and despatch. On 21 August 1808, at Vimiero, Wellesley's trade-mark exploitation of imaginatively chosen defensive positions and superior use of infantry fire-power inflicted a major defeat on General Junot. Junot's modest army was saved from immediate pursuit and probable destruction only by the timidity of Wellesley's immediate superior, Sir Harry Burrard. The French commander then converted deliverance to diplomatic triumph by negotiating a favourable armistice and convention with Sir Hew. As Byron put it in *Childe Harold*: 'Here folly dashed to earth the victor's plume / And policy regain'd what arms had lost'.

Junot's army was repatriated at his Britannic Majesty's expense, landed just over the border at Bayonne, with all its equipment, horses and considerable plunder (plundered from museums and churches as well as the people) without even the customary undertaking not to return to the same theatre. Some of these same forces harried General Moore's evacuation from Corunna in January 1809—a Dunkirk moment—and half of them confronted Wellington again at Torres Vedras in 1810, in the second invasion of Portugal under Marshals Soult and Massena. The convention is criticised by Wordsworth on both military and diplomatic grounds. Articles 4 and 6 insulted the Portuguese by making undertakings on behalf of the Portuguese civil government, without consulting them—including an undertaking that there would be no reprisals of any sort against Portuguese collaborators. These articles offended not only Wordsworth's sense of the respect due to allies, but the King's also. Article 7 annoyed the British Navy, by laying down how it should deal with a Russian fleet then blockaded

Simon Bainbridge

A Self-Defeating Campaign

WORDSWORTH'S imaginative campaign against Napoleon in the *Convention of Cintra* was, I shall argue, self-defeating. I begin by quoting what for me is one of the crucial passages in the *Convention of Cintra*, one which exemplifies Wordsworth's key rhetorical strategy in the tract. Writing of Wellington's initial victories over the French armies at Rolica and Vimiero, he comments:

It was not for the soil, or for the cities and forts, that Portugal was valued, but for the human feeling which was there; for the rights of human nature which might be there conspicuously asserted; for a triumph over injustice and oppression there to be achieved, which could neither be concealed nor disguised, and which should penetrate the darkest corner of the dark Continent of Europe by its splendour. We combated for victory in the empire of reason, for strong-holds in the imagination. Lisbon and Portugal, as city and soil, were chiefly prized by us as a *language*; but our generals mistook the counters of the game for the stake played for. (1401–9 [Clarendon 261–2])

There's much of interest in Wordsworth's key statement: his juxtaposition of the material with the emotional, the real with the symbolic; his construction of the war as a set of binary oppositions; his surprising adoption of a discourse of darkness more frequently applied to Africa than Europe; and his appropriation of elements of political discourse from both ends of the spectrum of the revolution debate of the previous decade. But what I particularly want to highlight here is Wordsworth's construction of the peninsular war as pre-eminently imaginative and discursive. As Wordsworth comments elsewhere in the Tract, Napoleon's 'power is strongest, in the imaginations of men, which are sure to fall under the bondage of long-continued success' (945–7 [249]), and it is this essentially imaginative nature of the war that the British generals who ratified the convention have failed to grasp – 'our Generals mistook the counters of the game for the stake played for.'

In the *Convention of Cintra*, then, Wordsworth tackles head on what we might see

David Bromwich

Vicarious Feeling: Spanish Independence, English Liberty

THE *Convention of Cintra* seems to me one of the great political essays of the Romantic era, but to call it a political essay is only a convenience. It begins as analysis and ends as a work of moral suasion, an eloquent statement of enthusiasm that means to convert its readers to a larger cause than the author can specify. Wordsworth wrote it with an urgency as driving as one feels in his major poems; yet its argument, plainly advancing a local cause under pressure of circumstance, remains difficult to reduce to practical wisdom. Its exhortations are at once republican, nationalist, and cosmopolitan: a curious blend. If, finally, Wordsworth professes an ideology of republican nationalism, the reader is made to arrive at national self-feeling by vicarious association with another people's act of resistance; it is resistance itself that comes to be identified with the spirit of revolution. So complete is this equation that Wordsworth can say that the spirit of the French Revolution is most alive in the work of destroying 'the child of the revolution,' Napoleon.

He wrote it not long after he had finished writing his *Intimations Ode*. He was even more concerned at this than at other periods with demonstrating the coherence of his life and feelings; and it is fair to say *The Convention of Cintra* means to prove his days 'Bound each to each by natural piety' in the realm of politics, just as the ode meant to prove them so in the realm of imagination and personal identity.

Politics, for Wordsworth, no less than poetry is subject to a test of sincerity, which means a test of sensation. Recall his words in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* about the natural interest taken by the poet in 'the goings-on of the Universe' (Clarendon, 1: 138); the same interest is shown by the citizen, in *The Convention of Cintra*, who pursues 'the appearances and intercourse of daily life' (2956 [Clarendon, 404]). The first of these concerns is abstract, the second particular and gregarious, but both are outward-looking and tend toward civic-mindedness. In *The Convention of Cintra*, too, Wordsworth cares for 'that knowledge which is founded not upon things but upon sensations;—sensations which are general, and under general influences (and

Timothy Michael

The State of Knowledge in *The Convention of Cintra*

FOURTEEN years before composing *The Convention of Cintra* (1809), Wordsworth wrote to his Cambridge friend, William Matthews, who had recently visited the Iberian Peninsula. Wordsworth asks: ‘What rema[rks] do you make on the Portuguese? in what state is knowledge with them? and have the principles of free government any advocate there? or is Liberty a sound, of which they have never heard? Are they so debased by superstition as we are told, or are they improving in anything?’ (Letter to William Matthews, 17 February, 1794).¹ Wordsworth would assume a more forgiving tone regarding Portuguese superstition in *Cintra*, but his interest in the ‘state of knowledge’ with them, and with British statesmen, would remain undiminished. The state and status of knowledge are, I argue, at the center of Wordsworth’s political pamphlet (‘state,’ with its senses of both ‘condition’ and ‘body politic,’ and ‘status’ share, of course, an etymological root [L, *status*, ‘condition’], which would also give rise to ‘estate’). The immediacy with which Wordsworth inquires into the Portuguese state of knowledge, and the question’s contiguity with a question about the ‘principles of free government,’ is telling. The argument of *The Convention of Cintra* is premised on an intimate connection between knowledge and liberty (‘Wherever the heaving and effort of freedom was spread, [mental] purification must have followed it’ [2577-78]).² The pamphlet defines knowledge in such a way as to justify a militaristic defense of freedom.

The argument of *Cintra* is straightforward: in allowing the defeated French army to leave the Iberian Peninsula on the most favourable terms, the British generals who

1 *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1785–1805)*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.110

2 William Wordsworth, *The Convention of Cintra* in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. I, ed. W. J. B Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.293 [all subsequent references to *Cintra* given with line numbers only]

Patrick Vincent

Sleep or Death?

Republicanism in *The Convention of Cintra*

IN his account of a meeting with the Lake Poets at Grasmere in October 1810, the Franco-American travel writer Louis Simond wryly notes that after having planned to emigrate to America,

At present, these gentlemen seem to think that there is no need of going so far for liberty, and that there is a reasonable allowance of it at home. Their democracy is come down to Whiggism, and may not even stop there.¹

Simond, in the words of Thomas De Quincey, ‘was a thorough knowing man of the world, keen, sharp as a razor, and valuing nothing but the tangible and the ponderable’. Married to the niece of John Wilkes and related to Swiss historian Jean-Charles Simonde de Sismondi, Simond was a committed liberal, with little patience for poetry or for political romanticism, as may be gathered from his brief conversation with Wordsworth during a walk to Easedale Tarn: ‘They met, they saw, they interdespised.’² Commenting on the Lake Poets’ views on the Peninsular War, Simond is particularly taken aback by what he sees as a case study in political accommodation:

But it is remarkable, that this strange Spanish cause is one of the watch-words of party, to which I have alluded to before. By a strange perversion of the human mind, those liberal and independent opinions in matter of government, which one of the parties professes, are generally found associated with a certain toleration of usurpation and tyranny in certain situations; which is, on the contrary, held in utter abhorrence by the other party, although accused of being, otherwise, less nice on those points than its adversary. This might well raise uncharitable suspicions

1 Louis Simond, *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain in the years 1810 and 1811*, London: Longman, 1815, volume 1, p. 350.

2 Thomas De Quincey, ‘Lake Reminiscences from 1807 to 1830’, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, Gen. Ed. Grevel Lindop, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003, vol. 11, pp. 187–189.

[7].

The Convention of Cintra
edited by W. J. B. Owen

INTRODUCTION: GENERAL

IN August 1807 Napoleon attempted to bring Portugal within the Continental System by demanding that by 1 September the Prince-Regent should declare war on Great Britain and seize British subjects and property in Portugal. After some temporizing by the Prince-Regent, unsatisfactory to France, the French and Spanish ambassadors left Lisbon on 30 September; and in October a French army under Junot entered Spain on its way to Portugal. It reached Salamanca on 12 November; thereafter it hastened its march by way of Alcantara, the Tagus valley, and Abrantes; and, with considerable difficulty and loss of men and armament, though without significant Portuguese opposition, began to arrive in Lisbon on 30 November. The day before, the Prince-Regent, who had meanwhile complied with most of Napoleon's demands without being able thereby to conciliate him, had set sail with his court for Rio de Janeiro. Junot settled down in Lisbon to rule and tyrannize over the Portuguese; there was no organized opposition for some months.

Meanwhile disturbances in the Spanish Court, arising from the incompetence of King Charles IV and the hostility of his son Ferdinand, Prince of the Asturias, towards the Court favourite Manuel Godoy, provided a favourable opportunity for French interference. On 27 October 1807 Ferdinand was arrested on a charge of treason; on the day of his arrest there was signed by France and Spain the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau, which proposed a division of Portuguese territory between France and Spain, and which permitted the entry of French troops into Spain to ensure this division.¹ By 22 November a force of 25,000 under Dupont had crossed the Spanish border from Bayonne, and on 8 January 1808 another force of 30,000 under Monecy entered Spain. These forces occupied strong positions in northern Spain without attempting to enter Portugal, where, indeed, they were not required. Between mid-February and mid-March 1808 French forces, casting aside the pretence that they were in passage for Portugal, seized four Spanish border fortresses (Pampeluna, Barcelona, San Sebastian, and Figueras), and advanced towards Madrid; their command was taken over by Murat. The Spanish Court, already removed to Aranjuez, prepared to move to Seville. Riots aimed at Godoy at Aranjuez on 17 March prevented this; they

¹ The text was printed in *Courier*, 10 Oct. 1808.

CONCERNING
THE RELATIONS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN,
SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL,
TO EACH OTHER, AND TO THE COMMON ENEMY,
AT THIS CRISIS;
AND SPECIFICALLY AS AFFECTED BY
THE
CONVENTION OF CINTRA:

*The whole brought to the test of those Principles, by which
alone the Independence and Freedom of Nations
can be Preserved or Recovered.*



Qui didicit patriae quid debeat;—
Quod sit conscripti, quod judicis officium; quae
Partes in bellum missi ducis.



BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.



London:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.



1809.