

JOHN BROWN'S *DESCRIPTION OF THE LAKE AT KESWICK*:
NEW CLUES AND CLARIFICATIONS

Abstract: This article reports on the discovery of hitherto undocumented printings of John Brown's *Description of the Lake at Keswick*. Brown's account of Keswick has long been recognised as a foundational document in the development of interest in the English Lake District during the eighteenth century. Such recognition notwithstanding, the history of Brown's *Description* has not been fully documented and this lack of documentation has led to a number of mistaken assumptions about the text. The purpose of the present article is, therefore, not only to update the bibliographical record, but also to clarify a few inaccuracies in previous discussions of Brown's account. In the process, the article explains how the early versions of Brown's *Description* add a new dimension to the reception history of the text and, moreover, shift our understanding of the way the private circulation of unpublished print informed eighteenth-century appreciations of the Lakes region. The article includes an appendix, which presents a copy of the early printings of Brown's text with a concise commentary.

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John Brown (1715–1766), the moralist and theologian, was one of the more gifted men of his generation. A graduate of St John's College, Cambridge (BA 1735, MA 1739, DD 1755), and an accomplished poet, painter, and musician, Brown was regarded by his contemporaries as an artist of 'uncommon ingenuity'.¹ A tutor and advisor to William Gilpin (whose picturesque tours helped to define the aesthetic culture of the later Georgian era), Brown was, moreover, recognised as one of the earliest and most influential celebrants of the English Lake District. Indeed, as William Wordsworth went on to acknowledge, it is Brown who should be credited with having shaped the sensibility that first brought the Lakes region widespread renown.²

Brown's most important work in this context is a short prose sketch, which he appears to have written in the early 1750s: *A Description of the Lake at Keswick*. Widely consulted and frequently reprinted, this brief text has long been ranked among the earliest and most influential aesthetic appreciations of the Lakes. As Peter Bicknell observes in his authoritative bibliography of Lakeland tourist publications: Brown's account, though little more than 1,000 words in length, effectively set 'the pattern for picturesque writing about the Lake District', and consequently did more than many much-longer works to shape the taste for mountain scenery in Britain during

¹ Andrew Kippis, Joseph Towers, et al., 'John Brown', *Biographia Britannica: Or, the Lives of the Most Eminent Persons to Have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland from the Earliest Ages to the Present Times*, 5 vols (London: W. and A. Strahan, 1778–1793), II, 653–74: p. 673.

² William Wordsworth, *A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England* (London: Longman & Co., 1823), p. 34.

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the latter half of the eighteenth century.³

The historical significance of Brown's *Description* has thus been generally acknowledged. The bibliographical history of this important text has not, however, been fully documented, and this lack of documentation has resulted in mistaken assumptions and misinterpretations. Most sources, including Bicknell's bibliography, refer to either 1766 or 1767 as the date of the *Description*'s first publication. Recent research, though, has turned up a group of earlier, anonymous printings of the text which have hitherto escaped notice. These printings appeared in metropolitan periodicals during the Spring of 1762. Their existence pushes the publication date of Brown's *Description* back by half a decade and accordingly requires the bibliographical record to be brought up to date.

In addition to providing this update and presenting the text of these early printings (see Appendix 1), the purpose of this article is to clarify a few scholarly misunderstandings that they bring to light. In making these clarifications, moreover, I want to examine a unique insight that these early versions of Brown's *Description* afford: namely, the role played by the private circulation of unpublished print in shaping Georgian appreciations of Lakeland scenery. Taking notice of this heretofore undocumented aspect of Brown's account adds a new dimension both to the reception history of the text and to the cultural history of early Lake District tourism.

In order to understand the significance of these early printings of Brown's *Description*, it is first necessary to summarise the history of the text's genesis and publication. This task is not a simple one, though, as the dating and dissemination of Brown's *Description* are matters of more uncertainty than previous discussions of the text have acknowledged. It is hoped that a detailed bibliographical synopsis will help to clarify what we currently know about the *Description* and to establish a stable foundation for future research.

³ Peter Bicknell, *The Picturesque Scenery of the Lake District, 1752–1855: A Bibliography* (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1990), p. 24.

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It is generally thought that Brown's account formed part of a personal epistle to George Lyttelton, 1st Baron Lyttelton (1709–1773) and that this epistle was written in either 1751 or 1753.⁴ Neither this dating nor the identity of Brown's addressee can be confirmed, however, as no manuscript of the letter is currently available to consult.⁵ In the absence of such evidence, we

⁴ See, indicatively, Hermann M. Flasdieck, *John Brown (1715–1766) und Seine Dissertation on Poetry and Music* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1924), pp. 13, 139–42; Rose Mary Davis, *The Good Lord Lyttelton: A Study in Eighteenth Century Politics* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1939), p. 143; Donald D. Eddy, *A Bibliography of John Brown* (New York, NY: Bibliographical Society of America, 1971), pp. 119–27; Donald D. Eddy, 'John Brown: The Columbus of Keswick', *Modern Philology*, 73, pt. 2: A Supplement to Honor Arthur Friedman (1976), S74–S84; Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1986), pp. 177–8; Bicknell, *Picturesque Scenery*, pp. 2, 23–4; William Roberts, *A Dawn of Imaginative Feeling: The Contribution of John Brown to Eighteenth Century Thought and Literature* (Carlisle: Northern Scholar Press, 1996), pp. 33–5, 60–4; Stephen Hebron, 'John Brown (1715–1766), *A Description of the Lake at Keswick, by a late popular writer, Kendal: 1771*', in *Savage Grandeur and Noblest Thoughts: Discovering the Lake District, 1750–1820*, ed. by Cecilia Powell and Stephen Hebron (Grasmere: Wordsworth Trust, 2010), pp. 47–8; Betty A. Schellenberg, *Literary Coterie and the Making of Modern Print Culture, 1740–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 183, 191–6.

⁵ A manuscript version of Brown's *Description* is recorded as having been sold as lot no. 612 at Anderson House, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on 18 June 2013. The Anderson & Garland catalogue describes the contents of this lot as 'Manuscript Life of Prince Henry, 4to, half calf, pen and ink portrait of Prince Henry, c. 76 pages, signed "J. Watson" at the end, [early 19th century]; Manuscript entitled "Description of the Lake at Keswick (and the Adjacent Country) in Cumberland", 12mo, unbound, 9 pp. [early 19th century?]' It is noteworthy that this description accords with the make-up of the early chapbook versions of Brown's text published between

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are forced to rely on a combination of circumstantial and conjectural clues, most of which have been gleaned from other eighteenth-century sources.

That Brown's *Description* originally formed part of a personal epistle is affirmed by nearly every printing of the text from the early 1760s onwards. Some sources specifically refer to the *Description* as an 'extract of a letter' or as being 'communicated in a letter to a friend', and this designation certainly agrees with the sociable tone of Brown's account. The notion that Brown's addressee was Sir George Lyttelton is, however, rather more difficult to prove. This claim has circulated in print since at least 1780 (when it was advanced in the summary of Brown's career included in the second edition of the *Biographia Britannica*), and though it does seem to be consistent with the text of the *Description* and with what is known about Brown's life, without more conclusive evidence one should be cautious about accepting this attribution as a fact.⁶

It is very likely that the opening line of the *Description* ('In my Way to the North from Hagley') refers to Lyttelton's country estate of Hagley Hall. Brown is recorded as having visited Lyttelton's estate in the autumn of 1751, and it is generally assumed that he stopped at Hagley on his journey to Westmorland and Cumberland in 1753.⁷ It is, moreover, clear that Brown's

1767 and 1772. Most of these chapbooks are unbound pamphlets comprised of 4 leaves: title, with blank verso, and text pp. 3–8 (see Eddy, *Bibliography*, p. 121; Bicknell, *Picturesque Scenery*, p. 24). The author has attempted to contact the buyer of this lot to confirm whether the item in question is, in fact, a manuscript. As yet, no further information has been received.

⁶ Kippis, Towers, et al., 'John Brown', pp. 673–74.

⁷ See William Warburton to Richard Hurd (22 September 1751): in *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate to One of His Friends* (Kidderminster: G. Gower, 1808) pp. 62–5: p. 64. Brown held a lectureship at Carlisle Cathedral from 1739 to 1757. During this period he also held the livings of Morland, Westmorland and Lazonby, Cumberland. Brown was often absent from both parishes, however, especially during the 1750s. His visits to Keswick occasionally coincided with

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professional ambitions inclined him to seek the attention of Lyttelton and his circle, who evidently esteemed Brown's literary talents and his knowledge of the Vale of Keswick.

Archibald Bower, an associate of the Lyttelton family from the late 1740s, referred to Brown as 'the Columbus of Keswick' in a private letter sent to Sir George's brother, Charles, in August 1755.⁸

Bower's letter has been taken by some scholars as confirming that a manuscript version of Brown's account of Keswick had circulated among members of the Lyttelton circle by this date. Donald Eddy, for one, has gone so far as to declare on the basis of Bower's statements that 'members of the Lyttelton family were quoting Brown's letter at least as early as the summer of 1755'.⁹ More recently, Betty Schellenberg has followed Eddy, concluding that 'by 1755 members of the Lyttelton circle were invoking "the Columbus of Keswick's" travel writing in terms that suggested its already established reputation.'¹⁰

One sympathises with these scholars' desire to arrive at such conclusions. It seems incautious, however, to accept Bower's letter as proof of a general knowledge of Brown's *Description* among Lyttelton's family and friends by 1755. Bower's letter does not refer to the *Description*, nor does Bower actually quote Brown's words. Bower simply characterises Brown as

fulfilling his clerical duties. Thus, he is known to have travelled to Cumberland in 1753 in order to preach at the consecration of St James' Church, Whitehaven. See P. M. Horsley, 'John Brown (1715–1766)', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, ser. II, 69 (1969), pp. 240–74.

⁸ See Davis, *Good Lord Lyttelton*, p. 184; Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', p. S78. Bower's letter is preserved among the Lyttelton Collection in the Worcestershire Archives (705:104, BA15492/116/263).

⁹ Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', p. S78.

¹⁰ Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries*, pp. 191–3.

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a pioneering explorer of Keswick and its vicinity, which is something that Bower may have come to know by means other than Brown's account.¹¹ Brown was generally esteemed by his acquaintances for 'his taste for beaut[iful] scenery', and for his intimate knowledge of the localities of Keswick, Derwent Water, and Borrowdale.¹²

Thus, although the claim that Brown addressed his *Description* to Lord Lyttelton seems very plausible, we lack the evidence necessary to confirm whether this was indeed the case. It is also not possible at present to determine whether a version of Brown's *Description* had circulated among members of the Lyttelton circle by the mid-1750s. The date of the composition of Brown's letter remains uncertain. Many scholars have assumed that Brown wrote his account in 1753—partly, it seems, because this is the date assigned to the *Description* in Robert Carruthers's revised, third edition of *Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature*.¹³ Other commentators, however, have preferred to date the letter to 1751, as Brown is reported to have visited Hagley Hall that autumn.¹⁴ It should be noted that a third possibility has been proposed by William

¹¹ David Thomason has suggested that Bower toured Keswick and Borrowdale with Brown during the early 1750s. See David Thomason and Robert Woof, 'The Black Lead Mines, George Smith, and John Brown's Description of the Lake at Keswick', *Derwentwater: The Vale of Elysium* (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 1986), n. pag.

¹² William Gilpin, *Memoirs of Dr. Richard Gilpin, of Scaleby Castle in Cumberland; and of His Posterity in the Succeeding Two Generations* (1791), ed. by William Jackson (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1879), p. 76. On the relative obscurity of Keswick, see A. B.'s letter in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 31 (November 1761), pp. 500–1. Whether this A.B. happened to be Archibald Bower remains an issue for further inquiry.

¹³ Robert Carruthers, *Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature: A History, Critical*, rev. edn., 2 vols (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1876), I, pp. 809–810.

¹⁴ Warburton, *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate*, p. 64.

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Roberts, who (in light of the lack of evidence to the contrary) suggests that Brown's account may have actually been written closer to its earliest appearance in print.¹⁵ The fact of the matter, though, is that the only date we can confidently assign to Brown's *Description* at present is the *terminus ante quem* provided by the text's earliest known date of publication, which can now be set as April 1762.

Having surveyed the composition history of Brown's *Description*, it remains for me to offer a brief summary of the text's publication history before proceeding to explain the insights that the recently discovered printings of the work afford. A key variable to consider here is the various contexts in which Brown's account of Keswick was reprinted. It is generally known that a portion of the *Description* appeared anonymously in the *London Chronicle* for 24–26 April 1766.¹⁶ This printing of Brown's account, which appeared just a few months before his death, has previously been regarded as the earliest forerunner of the chapbook edition, *A Description of the Lake at Keswick (And the adjacent Country) in Cumberland. Communicated in a Letter to a Friend. By a Popular Writer*, which was printed in Newcastle in 1767 and, thereafter, reprinted in no fewer than four further separate editions in Kendal, Whitehaven, and London between 1770 and 1772.¹⁷

Of these five chapbook editions, those marked with Newcastle, Kendal, and Whitehaven imprints were all published anonymously. The chapbook printed in London in 1772, which

¹⁵ Roberts, *Dawn of Imaginative Feeling*, p. 61. Roberts assumed that the *London Chronicle* article of April 1766 was the first printing of the *Description*, and he therefore proposed that the text might be dated to September 1765, when Brown is known to have been in Keswick. The discovery of printings of the *Description* from 1762 rules out this possibility.

¹⁶ Eddy, however, was unaware of this printing (see *Bibliography*, pp. 119–20 and 'Columbus of Keswick', pp. S78–S82), and this oversight has led to inaccuracies in more recent scholarly work, including Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries*, p. 183, 191–3.

¹⁷ See Bicknell, *Picturesque Scenery*, p. 24

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featured a dedication crediting Brown as its author, is the only one of these works known to have referred to him by name. By this time, however, Brown's authorship had already been acknowledged. As early as 1768, a version of the *Description* attributed to 'the late ingenious Dr. Brown' appeared as a footnote in George Pearch's continuation of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems in Two Volumes*.¹⁸ This footnote version of Brown's account was incorporated in all three further editions of Pearch's miscellany (1770, 1775, and 1783), and during this interval the text was also reprinted, with notices of Brown's authorship, in periodicals including the *Monthly Ledger* and the *Hibernian Magazine*.¹⁹ The continual reprinting of the *Description* in these comparatively ephemeral print contexts seems to have worked in tandem with the text's inclusion in more frequently reissued works, like Pearch's continuation of Dodsley's *Collection*, to ensure the widespread

¹⁸ See John Dalton, 'A Descriptive Poem, Addressed to Two Ladies at Their Return from Viewing the Mines near Whitehaven', *A Collection of Poems in Two Volumes, by Several Hands*, 2 vols (London: G. Pearch, 1768), I, pp. 23–43: pp. 36–9. Dalton's poem is another seminal account of the scenery of Cumberland and Westmorland. The version of Brown's account that Pearch appended to Dalton's poem agrees in most respects with other published versions of the *Description*. The only notable difference is the substitution of the phrase 'the more distant hills beyond' for 'the more distant hills before'. The latter reading appears in the Newcastle edition of 1767 and in three of the other five chapbook editions of Brown's text. See Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', p. S81, and Appendix 1 below.

¹⁹ 'A Description of the Lake at Keswick, communicated, in a Letter to a Friend, by the late Dr. Brown', *The Monthly Ledger; or, Literary Repository*, 2 (1774), 120–3; 'A Description of the Lake at Keswick, (and the adjacent Country) in Cumberland Communicated in a Letter to a Friend By the Rev. Dr. John Brown', *Hibernian Magazine; or, Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, n. vol. (February 1772), 74–6.

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dissemination of Brown's words.²⁰

In 1776, moreover, a previously unprinted portion of Brown's account of Keswick appeared in the preface to Richard Cumberland's *Odes*. According to Cumberland, this extract, which includes Brown's verse effusion 'Now sunk the Sun', formed a separate part of the 'Manuscript of the late ingenious Dr. Browne' that had 'hitherto escaped publication'.²¹ Cumberland does not hint at any rationale for the exclusion of this portion of Brown's account from previous printings of the *Description*. One is inclined, on Cumberland's authority, to treat the extract that includes Brown's 'Now sunk the Sun' as a sort of poetic coda to the body of his prose sketch. It should be noted, however, that no other contemporaneous publication appears to have explicitly combined the two passages in this way.

Such uncertainties notwithstanding, it is clear that, like Pearch's miscellany, Cumberland's preface not only lent authority to Brown's *Description*, but also prolonged its circulation in print. In this latter respect, in particular, the succinctness of Brown's account proved as crucial to its transmission as its eloquence. As Stephen Hebron has recently pointed out, the widespread reprinting of the *Description* was undoubtedly aided by its 'relative brevity'.²² Both portions of Brown's text were 'short enough to turn up as a footnote', and it was through this sort of paratextual interpolation that his account of Keswick rose from 'obscure private

²⁰ It has recently come to light that, by the mid 1770s, travelers from as far away as Bristol had consulted the text of Brown's *Description* in Pearch's *Collection* before visiting the Lake District. See, on this topic, Christopher Donaldson, Robert Dunning, and Angus Winchester (eds), *Henry Hobbouse's Tour of Cumbria in 1774* (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 2017). Tract Series, no 27.

²¹ Richard Cumberland, *Odes* (London: J. Robson, 1776), pp. 4–6. See also Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', p. S78–S84; *Bibliography*, pp. 123–6.

²² Hebron, 'John Brown', p. 47.

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beginnings' to become 'one of the most anthologised of all Lakes descriptions.'²³

Significantly, the portions of the *Description* reproduced in chapbooks and periodicals, and by figures such as Pearch and Cumberland, were also reprinted in many of the more notable accounts of the Lakes region published during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. These publications include both the 1774 and 1776 editions of William Hutchinson's *Excursion to the Lakes*, as well as his *History of the County of Cumberland* (1794).²⁴ Nor was Hutchinson the only antiquarian to take an interest in, what he called, Brown's 'short description of the beauties of Keswick'.²⁵ The prose portion of Brown's account was also incorporated in Joseph Nicolson and Richard Burn's *Westmorland and Cumberland* (1777) and, even more importantly, in Thomas West's *Guide to the Lakes* from the enlarged, second edition of 1780 onwards.²⁶

West's *Guide* proved a remarkably influential and long-lived publication. First printed in 1778, the book passed through no fewer than eleven editions by 1821 and, as Bicknell surmises, seems to have accompanied 'almost every visitor to the Lakes' during that 'half century'.²⁷ As much a tourist guide as an arbiter of taste, the enlarged 1780 edition of West's *Guide* drew special attention to Brown's account and incorporated it as part of an anthology of extracts 'on the

²³ Hebron, 'John Brown', p. 47.

²⁴ William Hutchinson, *An Excursion to the Lakes in Westmorland and Cumberland, in August 1773* (London: J. Wilkie, 1774), pp. 108–13 (in the edition of 1776, Brown's account appears on pp. 127–30); William Hutchinson, *The History of the County of Cumberland*, 2 vols (Carlisle: F. Jollie, 1794), I, 444; II, 159–60.

²⁵ Hutchinson, *An Excursion to the Lakes*, pp. 107–8.

²⁶ Joseph Nicolson and Richard Burn, *The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland*, 2 vols (London 1777), II, pp. 83–5; Thomas West, *A Guide to the Lakes*, 2nd edn (London: Richardson and Urquhart, 1780), pp. 115, 193–6.

²⁷ Bicknell, *Picturesque Scenery*, p. 33.

subject of the *lakes*.²⁸

As the inclusion of the *Description* in this latter context implies, by the time the Lake District had become a fashionable tourist destination, Brown's account was being prescribed as an expression of the aesthetic sensibility by which the region was to be enjoyed. Held up as a standard of taste, Brown's words were approvingly printed, quoted, or referenced in an array of subsequent descriptions of the Lakeland countryside, including one of the more influential works of Brown's former pupil, Gilpin: *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (1786).²⁹ Wordsworth, for his part, not only chose to reprint Brown's 'Now sunk the Sun' in the 1823 and 1835 editions of his *Guide*, but also commended Brown as a 'Writer [...] who led the way to a worthy admiration of this country.'³⁰ From Wordsworth, who was normally rather restrained in his assessment of other writers, such a recommendation was high praise indeed.

Brown died in the autumn of 1766, but, as the foregoing publication history affirms, his *Description of the Lake at Keswick* helped to ensure his posthumous reputation. What has not been clear until now, however, is that a portion of Brown's account of Keswick was actually published

²⁸ West, *Guide* (1780), p. 193. Other extracts in these addenda include an excerpt of Dalton's 'Descriptive Poem', Cumberland's 'Ode to the Sun', and the epistolary journal Thomas Gray compiled during his tour through Cumberland and Westmorland in 1769.

²⁹ William Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Summer of 1772*, 2 vols (London: R. Blamire, 1786), I, 83, 186. For a more extensive bibliography of works that quote or include a portion of Brown's account, see Eddy, *Bibliography*, pp. 119–27. For an account of Brown's relationship with the Gilpin family, see Horsley, 'John Brown', pp. 243–4; Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', S75–S76; and Roberts, pp. 10–13.

³⁰ Wordsworth, *Scenery of the Lakes*, p. 34. Brown's verses were also included in the version of Wordsworth's *Guide* incorporated in the five editions of John Hudson's *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* between 1842 and 1859.

several years prior to his death. As early as April 1762, the same extract from the *Description* printed in the *London Chronicle* four years later, appeared in at least four different metropolitan periodicals: the *London Register*, the *St James's Chronicle*, the *London Magazine*, and the *Gentleman's and London Magazine*.³¹ These printings prove that Brown's *Description* circulated publicly long before scholars have hitherto assumed. The version of the text that appeared in the *London Register* for April 1762 is, however, of particular interest for the sake of the title it assigns to Brown's account and, moreover, the headnote it prints alongside his text.

Like the other four early printings documented here, the *London Register* entitled the reproduced portion of Brown's *Description* as an 'Extract of a Letter to ***'. The contents page of the magazine, however, assigned the piece a more detailed title which openly alluded to Brown's authorship: 'Elegant description of a rural scene by the author of *Barbarossa*'.³² The work referenced here, Brown's *Barbarossa*, had premiered, with David Garrick's support, at Drury Lane in December 1754. The play, a tragedy based on the life of the Ottoman corsair Oruç Reis (c.1474–1518), proved a more than moderate success. It was favourably reviewed and frequently republished, passing through three editions by 1757 and further reprintings in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York, and Boston by the end of the century.³³ The play, in short, was one of the works that had helped to established Brown's literary reputation, and the reference to it on

³¹ See, 'Extract of a Letter to ***', *London Register; or, Notes of the Present Times* (April 1762), 308–9; 'Extract of a Letter to ***', *St James's Chronicle; or, the British Evening-Post* (27–29 April 1762), 2; 'Extract of a Letter to ***', *London Magazine; Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* (May 1762), 259–60; 'Elegant Descript. of Keswick', *Gentleman's and London Magazine* (May 1762), 286–7. The *Gentleman's and London Magazine* was a Dublin-based production that recycled and repurposed content from London newspapers and magazines.

³² 'Contents', *London Register* (April 1762), n. pag.

³³ Eddy, *Bibliography*, pp. 40–51.

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the contents page of the *London Register* would have signalled to almost anyone connected with the metropolitan literary scene the identity of the *Description's* author.

This discovery is noteworthy as it clarifies that (as invaluable as his work on Brown's bibliography is) Donald Eddy was mistaken when he claimed that the *Description* was first 'published anonymously in Newcastle ... in 1767'.³⁴ Not only was the *Description* published at least five years earlier, but by that time at least one version of the text then available had indirectly acknowledged Brown as its author. Of even greater importance than this finding, though, are the insights afforded by the headnote that the *London Register* included above Brown's account: 'The following sublime and elegant description, which comes from the pen of a very popular writer, has already been printed on a small slip of paper, and distributed among his friends and acquaintance. A correspondent having favoured us with a copy, we hope we shall not offer an unpardonable violence to his modesty, by communicating it to the public.'³⁵

These statements would seem to confirm the degree to which Brown's account was embedded in the sort of coterie culture that, as Betty Schellenberg has recently argued, shaped the development of domestic tourism in Britain during the latter half of the eighteenth century.³⁶ Upon closer inspection, however, the headnote provides a piece of information that complicates this interpretation and adds a new dimension to the reception history of Brown's *Description*: namely, that his text is described here as having circulated privately not as a manuscript, but as a

³⁴ Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', p. S78.

³⁵ 'Extract', *London Register*, p. 308. This headnote also appears in full above the copy of the *Description* printed in the *St James's Chronicle*; it appears in an abbreviated form above the version included in the *Gentleman's and London Magazine*. It does not, however, appear in the *London Magazine*.

³⁶ Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries*, pp. 181–204.

'printed' copy.³⁷

This detail does not altogether undermine Schellenberg's argument, which acknowledges the non-linear, mutual interdependence of manuscript and print cultures in this period. At the same time, however, Schellenberg is evidently mistaken in her assertion that Brown's account was 'available only in manuscript form' prior to its publication and, consequently, that the private circulation of the *Description* was conducted solely 'by means other than print.'³⁸ Indeed, the reception history of Brown's *Description* helpfully highlights the inadequacy of our tendency to treat print as an inherently public form of literary production. Recognising this aspect of the history of Brown's text requires us to resist the idea that script was the exclusive medium through which eighteenth-century literary circles and societies exchanged unpublished work. Thus, as much as commentators such as Schellenberg are correct to remind us that the study of early writing about the Lake District needs to account for 'the exchange of literary manuscripts' among elite networks of patrons and clients, it is clear that attention must also be paid in this context to the private dissemination of unpublished works in print.³⁹

This realisation affirms the broader significance of these early copies of the *Description*; but there is another more specific contribution that the discovery of these previously undocumented reprintings makes to our knowledge of the history of Brown's account. The version of Brown's text printed in the *London Register* and elsewhere in the Spring of 1762 is the

³⁷ It might be suggested that the word 'printed' was being used loosely as a synonym for writing (see 'print, v.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, def. nos. 2.b. and 4.), especially since the headnote also mentions Brown's 'Pen'. This possibility seems unlikely, however, given the conventional use of the term by the mid-eighteenth century. See, indicatively, Samuel Johnson, 'To PRINT, v. a.', *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan, 1755), II, n. pag., def. no. 4.

³⁸ Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries*, pp. 183, 192.

³⁹ Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries*, pp. 184.

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same portion of the *Description* that appeared four years later in the *London Chronicle*, and thereafter in chapbooks and, among other places, Pearch's miscellany. These printings all include Brown's prose sketch of Keswick, but not the verse effusion reproduced by Richard Cumberland in 1776. One is inclined to infer, then, on the authority of the headnote published in 1762, that the later printings of the prose portion of Brown's account were also based on copies of the 'printed [...] slip of paper' which had been 'distributed among his friends'. It seems possible, moreover, that this 'slip of paper' presented a version of the text that differed from the 'Manuscript' copy to which Cumberland refers in the preface to his *Odes*. It is certainly plausible that the manuscript that Cumberland consulted was a different document. It may have even been the source on which the privately circulated printed version of the *Description* was based. Without access to a manuscript of Brown's account, or to one of the 'printed [...] slip[s] of paper' mentioned in the headnote, such conjecture must necessarily be tentative. It is hoped, though, that the new clues and clarifications presented in this article will help to elicit additional evidence.

APPENDIX 1

The text printed below is a transcription of the version of Brown's prose sketch printed in the *London Register* in April 1762 (pp. 308–9), based on the copy now held in the Bodleian Library (BOD Vet. A5 e.7535). The *London Register* was a short-lived publication, and the contents of its April 1762 issue are not readily available in a digital format through the standard online academic collections. With this in mind, I have chosen to present this version as a copy-text, and to note significant variants from the other early printings of Brown's *Description* in bracketed footnotes: e.g. ^[1]. Basic differences of punctuation and capitalisation have not been noted, save with respect to the use of . . . and, which varies considerably between different versions of the text. I refer to the other printings using the following abbreviations:

StJ: *St James's Chronicle* (April 1762)

LM: *London Magazine* (May 1762)

GLM: *Gentleman's and London Magazine* (May 1762)

LC: *London Chronicle* (April 1766)

NCb: *A Description of the Lake at Keswick* (Newcastle, 1767)

The following sublime and elegant description, which comes from the pen of a very popular writer, has already been printed on a small slip of paper, and distributed among his friends and acquaintance. A correspondent having favoured us with a copy, we hope we shall not offer an unpardonable violence to his modesty, by communicating it to the public.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER to ***

———IN my way to the north from *Hagley*, I passed thro' *Dovedale*; and, to say the truth, was disappointed in it. When I came to *Buxton*, I visited another or two of their romantic scenes; but these are inferior to *Dovedale*. They are all but poor miniatures of KESWICK; which exceeds them

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more in grandeur than I can give you to imagine; and more, if possible, in beauty than in grandeur.

Instead of the narrow slip of valley which is seen at *Dovedale*, you have at KESWICK a vast amphitheatre, in circumference above twenty miles. Instead of a meagre rivulet, a noble living lake, ten miles round, of an oblong form, adorned with a variety of wooded islands. The rocks indeed of *Dovedale* are finely wild, pointed, and irregular; but the hills are both little and unanimated; and the margin of the brook is poorly edged with weeds, morass, and brushwood. .

.^[1] But at KESWICK, you will, on one side of the lake, see a rich and beautiful landskip^[2] of cultivated fields, rising to the eye in fine inequalities, with noble groves of oak, happily dispersed; and climbing the adjacent hills, shade above shade, in the most various and picturesque forms. On the opposite shore, you will find rocks and cliffs of stupendous height, hanging broken over the lake in horrible grandeur, some of them a thousand feet high, the woods climbing up their steep and shaggy sides, where mortal foot never yet approached: On these dreadful heights the eagles build their nests: a variety of waterfalls are seen pouring from their summits, and tumbling in vast sheets from rock to rock in rude and terrible magnificence: while on all sides of this immense amphitheatre the lofty mountains rise round, piercing the clouds in shapes as spiry and fantastic, as the very rocks of *Dovedale*. .^[3] To this I must add the frequent and bold projection of the cliffs into the lake, forming noble bays and promontories: In other parts they finely retire from it, and often open in abrupt chasms or clefts, thro' which at hand you see rich and cultivated vales, and beyond these at various distances, mountain rising over mountain; among which, new prospects present themselves in mist, till the eye is lost in an agreeable perplexity,

Where active Fancy travels beyond

^[1] GLM and LC: full stop. StJ and LM: full stop with dash.

^[2] LC: 'landscape'.

^[3] LM: full stop. StJ, LM, and GLM: full stop with dash.

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sense,

And pictures things unseen.—^[4]

Were I to analyse the two places into their constituent principles, I should tell you, that the full perfection of KESWICK consists of three circumstances, *beauty*, *horror*, and *immensity* united; the second of which is alone found in *Dovedale*. Of beauty it hath little: nature having left it almost a desert: neither its small extent, nor the diminutive and lifeless form of the hills admit magnificence. . .^[5] But to give you a complete idea of these three perfections, as they are joined in KESWICK, would require the united powers of *Claude*, *Salvator*, and *Poussin*. The first should throw his delicate sunshine over the cultivated^[6] vales, the scattered cots, the groves, the lake, and wooded islands. The second should dash out the horror of the rugged cliffs, the steepes, the hanging woods, and foaming waterfalls; while the grand pencil of *Poussin* should crown the whole, with the majesty of the impending mountains.

So much, for what I would call the *permanent* beauties of this astonishing scene. Were I not afraid of being tiresome, I could now dwell as long on its *varying* or *accidental* beauties. I would sail round the lake, anchor in every bay, and land you on every promontory and island. I would point out the perpetual change of prospect: the woods, rocks, cliffs, and mountains, by turns vanishing or rising into view: now gaining on the sight, hanging over our heads in their full dimensions, beautifully dreadful; and now, by a change of situation, assuming new romantic shapes, retiring and lessening on the eye, and insensibly losing themselves in an azure mist. I would remark the contrast of light and shade, produced by the morning and evening sun; the

^[4] This lyrical interjection may be of Brown's own composing. If, however, it is a quotation from another source, then it might assist in refining the dating of Brown's account. As yet, the source of these verses remains uncertain. See Brown, *Dawn of Imaginative Feeling*, p. 238.

^[5] LC: full stop. StJ and LM: full stop with dash. GLM: long dash.

^[6] Beginning of p. 309 in *London Register* copy.

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one gilding the western, and the other the eastern side of this immense amphitheatre; while the vast shadow projected by the mountains buries the opposite part in a deep and purple gloom, which the eye can hardly penetrate: the natural variety of colouring which the several objects produce is no less wonderful and pleasing: the ruling tincts in the valley being those of azure, green, and gold, yet ever various, arising from an intermixture of the lake, the woods, the grass and corn-fields: these are finely contrasted by the grey rocks and cliffs; and the whole heightened by the yellow streams of light, the purple hues, and misty azure of the mountains. Sometimes a serene air and clear sky disclose the tops of the highest hills: at others, you see clouds involving their summits, resting on their sides, or descending to their base, and rolling among the vallies, as in a vast furnace. . .^[7] when the winds are high, they roar among the cliffs and caverns like peals of thunder; then, too, the clouds are seen in vast bodies sweeping along the hills in gloomy greatness, while the lake joins the tumult, and tosses like a sea: but in calm weather the whole scene becomes new: the lake is a perfect mirrour; and the landskip^[8] in all its beauty, islands, fields, woods, rocks, and mountains, are seen inverted, and floating on its surface. . . .^[9] I will now carry you to the top of a cliff, where, if you dare approach the ridge, a new scene of astonishment presents itself; where the valley, lake, and islands, seem laying at your feet; where this expanse of water appears diminished to a little pool amidst the vast immeasurable objects that surround it; for here the summits of more distant hills appear beyond^[10] those you had

^[7] LC: full stop. StJ, LM, and GLM: full stop with dash.

^[8] LC: 'landscape'.

^[9] NCb: '. . .?'; LC: full stop.

^[10] NCb: 'hills appear before'. This variant is not, however, consistent with the directions given in the text, which clearly intends 'beyond' (as printed above), or, as one finds in the version of the text reprinted by Hutchinson (*Excursion*, p. 113), 'above'. See Eddy, 'Columbus of Keswick', p. S81.

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already seen: and rising behind each other in successive ranges and azure groups of craggy and broken steeps, form an immense and awful picture, which can only be expressed by the image of a tempestuous sea of mountains. . . .^[11] Let me now conduct you down again to the valley, and conclude with one circumstance more; which is, that a walk by still moon-light^[12] (at which time the distant waterfalls are heard in all their variety of sound) among these enchanting dales, opens a scene of such delicate beauty, repose, and solemnity, as exceeds all description.

Christopher Donaldson

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^[11] LC: full stop. LM: full stop with dash. StJ and GLM: long dash. NCb: ‘. . .?’.

^[12] LC: ‘(by still moonlight at which time the distant water-falls are heard in all their variety of sound)’.